

## St Carthage's Mothers' Day Address

Good morning

My name is Penny McCann and I have been asked to say a few words today to give my reflections on Mothers' Day and what it means to me.

In the church today, each of us here has a mother and each of us here have their own special memories of her.

All those "I remembers" are treasures that we own. And indeed most likely form the basis of what this day represents to each of us.

I have been privileged to be a mother of 4, a grandmother of 9, mother-in-law of 4 and a midwife to literally 100<sup>s</sup>. To this day, I remain genuinely in awe of my own mother, mother-in-law and both my grandmothers. I have no doubt their love, their resilience to life's challenges, their compassion for others in need and their strong faith helped shape my life to a considerable degree. I was raised in an environment full of love, commitment, and service, and for this I am forever grateful.

Presently at the National Gallery of Victoria, there is an exhibition of over 200 works called MOTHER. It captures many elements of mothering. It includes many paintings of Mary, mother of God looking lovingly upon her child Jesus.

But it also includes the emotional stories of mothers from the Stolen Generation, the desperate plight of refugee mothers caused by the chaos of war and its aftermath, and mothers who have lost their babies in childbirth and children in sickness and accidents. These mothers were not blessed as I have been.

This NGV exhibition made me aware of how motherhood is so well represented in a combination of prayer, art, music and poetry.

In a religious context, I thought of Luke's gospel (Luke: 26-38) where he records Mary's initial fears after the arch-angel Gabriel had appeared and informed her that God had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus.

*And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary for thou hast found favour with God.*

*And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son and shalt call his name Jesus.*

Motherhood is about fears and tears, love and joy.

Thus, we have the wonderful prayer we all know so well, paraphrasing it as

*Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you  
Blessed are you amongst women,  
And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus*

In a broader context, this concept is caught beautifully in the music and words of Paul McCartney's tribute to his mother, also named Mary, who died when he was only 14, again paraphrasing.

*When I find myself in times of trouble  
Mother Mary comes to me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be*

*And in my hour of darkness  
She is standing right in front of me  
Speaking words of wisdom, let it be*

In a personal context, I remember my father's World War 2 experience. He was in Bomber Command and shot down over Germany in 1943. My Dad was 20 years old at the time. In an interview many years later, he was asked about his first reaction after parachuting at night into enemy territory in the middle of winter, he said "I just wished for my mother".

Finally, I also clearly remember, after the birth of my first-born child, I just wanted to immediately share that joy, with my mother.

Indeed, you would all agree that Motherhood is about fears and tears, but just as importantly it's also about love, and joy.

This is why we celebrate Mother's Day – they play such a pivotal part in our lives.

Happy Mothers' Day everyone.

Penny McCann  
10<sup>th</sup> May 2026