

## **Mothering Sunday**

**Not To Be Confused With Mother's Day.**

**Mothering Sunday** is a holyday celebrated by Anglican, Roman Catholic and some Protestant Christians in many parts of the Globe. **It falls on the fourth Sunday in Lent**, exactly three weeks before Easter Day.

Once observed as a day on which people would visit their “Mother” church, it has also become an occasion for honouring the mothers of children and giving them presents. It is increasingly being misunderstood for Mother's Day, although that has always been a secular event quite different from the original Mothering Sunday.

During the 16th century, people returned to their Mother Church for a worship service to be held on Laetare Sunday. In this context, one's “Mother Church” was either the church where they were Baptised, or the Local Parish Church they are a member of, or the nearest Cathedral (the latter being the mother church of all the parish churches in a diocese).

Anyone who did this was commonly said to have gone “a-mothering”, although whether this term preceded the observance of Mothering Sunday is unclear. In later times, Mothering Sunday became a day when domestic servants were given a day off to visit their Mother Church, usually with their own mothers and other family members. It was often the only time that whole families could gather together, since on other days they were prevented by conflicting working hours, and servants were not given free days on other occasions.

Children and young people who were “in service” (as household servants) were given a day off on that date so they could visit their families (or, originally, return to their “Mother” Church). The children would pick wild flowers along the way to place in the church or give to their mothers. Eventually, the religious tradition evolved into the Mothering Sunday's secular tradition of giving gifts to mothers.

This Sunday was also once known as the “Sunday of the Five Loaves”, from the traditional Holy Gospel reading for the day. Prior to the adoption of the modern “common” lectionaries, the Holy Gospel reading for this Sunday in the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Western-Rite Orthodox, and Old Catholic churches was the story of the feeding of the five thousand.

For instance, the Anglican Book of Common Prayer stipulates St John's Gospel, 6:5-14 be read on Mothering Sunday.