

# SUNDAY PLUS

## Women who serve

# "Women's work?"

By Mary Bell

Society has expectations of its citizens: teachers teach, preachers preach, firemen fight fires, doctors care for the sick. If any of these happen to be women, there are also expectations that they will bear the children, nurture the family, look after its older members, provide a welcoming home, a warm meal, a sustaining loving environment.

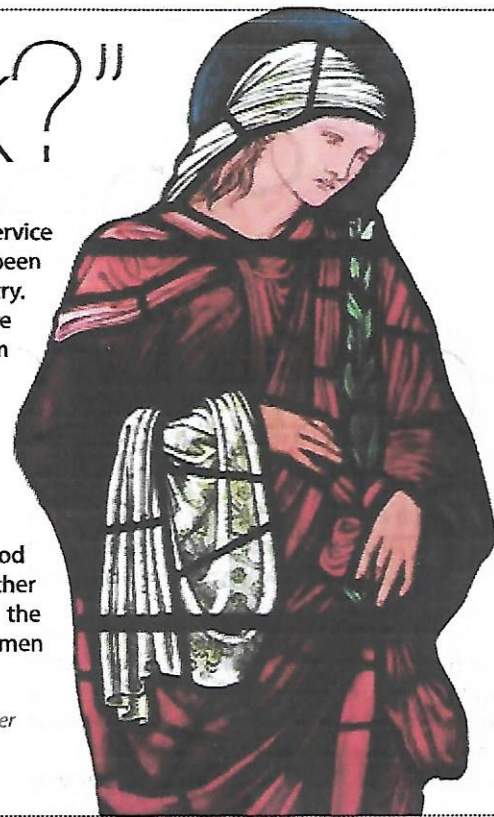
Even in modern "equal society" where both the sexes are expected to share the nurturing, it tends to fall to the female to provide the greater part of those services even if she also has a job.

A visitor to the family is offered refreshments – usually by the woman if she is present. No doubt Simon's mother-in-law, restored to health, was delighted to be able to provide these for Jesus: it was her pleasure but, of course, also her duty.

St Teresa of Calcutta is famous for her service to the poor. The late Queen Elizabeth II has been a splendid example of service to her country. But apart from famous women there are countless others whose apparently humdrum lives are passed in service to others. My grandmother took great satisfaction in looking after my grandfather, even cleaning his boots. She waited on him, at the same time taking in washing during the Great Depression. She did it out of love.

The supreme example of dutiful womanhood is Our Lady who accepted her role as the mother of the Saviour, supporting him even until the end, standing at the foot of the cross. Women often serve just by being there.

*Following many years in the classroom, retired teacher and Head of RE, Mary Bell now has time to enjoy the beauties of the natural world around her.*



Women are a gift. After God made man, he didn't create a lapdog for him to play with. No, he created two who are equal, a man and a woman.

All the rights of women stem from this equality. A society that is not able to make room for women does not move forward.

Are women objects to use and throwaway? This is terrible, right? Or are they a protected species?

Instead, it is a question of equality, which still has not been universally achieved. Unfortunately, in some places, women are still considered and treated as second-class citizens or worse, and we have to keep fighting this.

Women are not inferior: they are complementary and this also means women should be bringing their own unique gifts and talent and must not try to be like men.

A society that erases women from public life is a society that becomes impoverished.

Equal rights, yes, also equal opportunities, equality in moving forward. Pope Francis

## Practical thanks

By Natasha Pritchard

Today's readings might make us feel like we have a lot to live up to. Job's bleak descriptions of life's unending labours might leave us feeling hopeless. Paul making himself a slave to everyone for the sake of the Gospel might seem to us to be an impossible task.

Perhaps the role model we should take from today's readings is Simon's mother-in-law. Jesus heals her and she immediately rises from her sick bed to serve those in her house. In this character we see somebody who is so grateful for what God has done for her that the only fitting response for her is to offer her time and service to others.

Sometimes when God answers our prayers, we soon forget what he has done for us. Answered prayers should be a cause of thanksgiving and what better way is there to thank God than by serving others?

*Natasha Pritchard has worked in Catholic hospital chaplaincy and youth ministry, and is now Area Support Chaplain at Methodist Homes.*

Let us be servants to one another, making your kingdom come. Amen.

Feast of the week  
Thursday 8 February



## Day for Victims of Trafficking

Human trafficking is violence! The violence suffered by every woman and every girl is an open wound on the body of Christ, on the body of all humanity; it is a deep wound that affects every one of us too.

There are many women who have had the courage to rebel against violence. We men, too, are required to do so, to say no to every form of violence, including that against women and girls. And together we can and must fight to ensure that human rights are interpreted in a specific way, respecting diversity and recognising the dignity of every person, with special attention to those whose fundamental rights have been violated.

Pope Francis

Today:  
Job 7:1-4, 6-7  
1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23  
Mark 1:29-39

Monday:  
1 Kings 8:1-7, 9-13  
Mark 6:53-56

Tuesday:  
1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30  
Mark 7:1-13

Wednesday:  
1 Kings 10:1-10  
Mark 7:14-23

Thursday:  
1 Kings 11:4-13  
Mark 7:24-30

Friday:  
1 Kings 11:29-32; 12:19  
Mark 7:31-37

Saturday:  
1 Kings 12:26-32;  
13:33-34  
Mark 8:1-10

Next Sunday:  
Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46  
1 Corinthians 10:31 - 11:1  
Mark 1:40-45