

4th Sunday - Mother



“And you, Jesus, are you not also a mother? Are you not the mother who, like a hen, gathers her chicks under her wings?” So prayed Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 - 1109, picking up something Jesus himself had said. We see it illustrated in this mosaic, set into an altar in a church on the Mount of Olives. Near here perhaps, Jesus looked down over Jerusalem and lamented its treatment of the prophets, its treatment of himself. “How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings,” he said sorrowfully, “and you were not willing” (Luke 13.34).

Jesus describes himself, then, as a chicken whose chicks don't want her. In the mosaic, they are all running off from the haloed hen. Though she offers shelter and belonging, they “are not willing”. Her wings are empty. This is a mother bereft. A mother in mourning. This is how Jesus describes himself.

In one of the passages set for Mothering Sunday, we hear old Simeon tell Mary that “a sword will pierce your soul” (Luke 2.34-5). With motherhood comes vulnerability. And just as her motherhood will cause Mary bitter suffering, Jesus' own mothering will pierce his soul too. But he still opens his wings and longs to gather us in.

Today...

...as we thank you for human mother-love,
we also thank you, Mother Jesus, for yours.

Amen