



Steve Sheldon's reflection for Mothering Sunday 2025

700 years ago Mother Julian of Norwich wrote a book, which is the oldest surviving literature by an English woman. Her writings are still published and extensively read by those seeking a deeper insight into the nature and love of God.

We know almost nothing of Mother Julian's biography, but in her writings she does not hesitate to alternate between male and female imagery to push her readers beyond these mundane categories, even at times referring to Jesus as Mother Jesus.

When we speak of God our Father, we are using an image that helps us understand something beyond our feeble ability to comprehend.

When our ancestors called God 'our Father' and when we continue to do so, we are not speaking of 'Father' in its parenting definition, but in its creative definition. Indeed, the people at the time of Jesus thought that the creation of a baby was totally the work of the father, and the mother was just a receptacle. Modern understanding of fertilisation had not yet developed, and we reflect this in our creeds when we say, 'I believe in God the Father, creator of heaven and earth.' God's title of Father describes our total dependence upon him for our personal creation. We are here because of God.

Sadly, some people growing up have not had a positive or healthy relationship with their own biological fathers, and sometimes this use of the word Father for God has kept people away from a healthy loving relationship with God, our Creator. And so the use of Mother for God should not be looked down upon or thought weird or heretical.

Psalm 131:3 *But I still my soul and make it quiet, like a child upon its mother's breast; my soul is quieted within me.*

I've been reading Forward Day by Day, booklets of daily devotionals from the American Episcopal Church, for 45 years now. Every month is by a different writer which allows for a variety of styles and theologies. Over the years there are only 2 writers whom I vividly remember. One was a prisoner serving a life sentence for murder. The other was Minda Cox. Her little potted biography says that she is an artist, an author, and an international missionary. She is a graduate of South West Baptist University, and an ally and advocate for other disabled people. Raised by her mother, an Episcopal priest, Minda and her four sisters understand that what makes them different is also what makes them beautiful. Through these devotional meditations we infer that her sisters are all also disabled; so we can presume that this remarkable mother and priest has adopted and raised five disabled girls. I want to share Minda's words from her meditation on this Psalm

When I was a very little girl, it was easy to rest in my mother's arms, to lean against her heart as she wrapped her strong arms around me. Since I had no arms or legs to get in the way, I didn't outgrow her lap or the security of her embrace for a very long time.

When other children would make fun of how I look, when I felt as if I would never fit in anywhere at all, I could always wheel myself to her. She would gather me in her arms, and there I found my fears and tears quieted again. In the embrace of my mother, I experienced God as Mother, perhaps even before I understood God as Father.

God's own tender mothering touch continues to calm me when I find myself overwhelmed with worry or grief. When I come quietly before God and still my soul, I find renewed rest in God, "like a child upon its mother's breast," and I recall that rest in every hard place, in every busy day, and through every hard time.