

Questions

- For which two reasons were domestic servants given time off on Laetare Sunday? Tick **two**.
 - to rest and recuperate
 - to visit their 'mother church'
 - to spend time with their family
 - to attend to errands and duties
- How many balls of marzipan can be found on top of a Simnel cake? Tick one.
 - 10
 - 11
 - 12
 - 13
- Find and copy one phrase which shows that it is uncertain exactly what the modern tradition of Mother's Day is based on.

- What is the fourth Sunday of Lent sometimes referred to as among Christian communities?

- What is marzipan?

- Did people instantly start to buy presents rather than find them locally? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

- Do you think that it would be easy to celebrate special events if you were a domestic servant? Explain why.

- Explain how another celebration you know is similar to Mother's Day.

- Would you like to celebrate by taking part in any of the traditions mentioned in the text? Explain why.

Mother's Day

Mother's Day is an annual celebration on which people thank their mothers and mother figures (such as grandmas, aunts or guardians) in appreciation of everything they have done to help them both over the past 12 months and their lifetime.

Mothering Sunday

The Mother's Day we celebrate now is said to be based on the early Christian festival known as 'Mothering Sunday' – a significant event within family life during the 16th century.

During this period, children from poorer households commonly left home at around ten years of age in order to begin earning a small income to support their family. Many children began to work as domestic servants in wealthy households. Females became maids, whose duties included attending to housework and kitchen activities, while males would take more physical roles, such as cleaning stables, attending to animals and maintaining the property's gardens. Regardless of their role, domestic servants lived in the same place that they worked. They were rarely allowed to go home.

One rare occasion when domestic servants were allowed to leave work was on the fourth Sunday of the season of Lent, known as Laetare Sunday. On this day, domestic servants were given time



off so that they could spend time with their families and visit their 'mother church'. The 'mother church' could be: the main church in their town; the church they had been baptised in; the nearest cathedral (a large church with links to the local bishop). While walking home, the returning children would often pick the wild flowers, which grew along the side of the paths, to place in the church or give to their mothers as a small token of their love.



Mother's Day

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Over time, this practice continued and evolved into the non-religious tradition of giving gifts to mothers – known as Mothering Sunday. In the early 1900s, UK merchants began to realise how popular Mothering Sunday was becoming and saw an opportunity to make the tradition profitable. They began to sell cards and gifts specifically for this purpose and advertised the day as 'Mother's Day'.

Over time, the wild flowers picked by children were replaced by shop-bought gifts and, although children no longer worked as domestic servants, the fourth Sunday in the season of Lent continued to be set aside as a special day for families to spend time together. People in the UK and Ireland started to celebrate 'Mother's Day' on the same day that Mothering Sunday had been celebrated and so many people confuse the two celebrations by mistaking them for the same thing.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Just as the fourth Sunday in the season of Lent is now often known as both Mothering Sunday and Mother's Day, there are many other names given to this day.

Amongst Christian communities, the fourth Sunday in Lent is sometimes referred to as Rose Sunday. This is in relation to the colour of robes worn in the church. On this day, the robes change from purple to pink: the colour of the rose.

Many people also refer to this day by names which relate to eating, such as Refreshment Sunday, Simnel Sunday and (in the county of Surrey) Pudding Pie Sunday. These names are given to acknowledge how cakes – especially Simnel cakes – would be baked to celebrate families coming back together on this day. Simnel cakes are a popular dessert associated with Mother's Day. They are light fruit cakes topped with 11 balls of marzipan, which is a white or yellow almond paste. Cakes would also be eaten as a break from fasting on the middle Sunday of Lent.

