



**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020**

## **Mothering Sunday**

**TODAY IS MOTHERING SUNDAY!** which is a little different to Mother's Day. We too give thanks for those who mother us; but we remember that we are also children of our Heavenly Father and reflect on our calling as Christ's Church to be the mother of all God's children.

### **Readings**

#### **Exodus 2.1-10      The Birth of Moses**

**2** Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, <sup>2</sup> and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. <sup>3</sup> But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket<sup>[a]</sup> for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. <sup>4</sup> His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

<sup>5</sup> Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. <sup>6</sup> She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said.

<sup>7</sup> Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

<sup>8</sup> "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. <sup>9</sup> Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. <sup>10</sup> When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses,<sup>[b]</sup> saying, "I drew him out of the water."

*Moses' mother can't keep him safe. She has no choice but to entrust her most precious treasure to the strange and terrifying waters of the Nile. By grace, other people step into the picture, each of them with seemingly indispensable roles, and a community of care is formed – a community of care in which all needs are known and miraculously satisfied. As a church community, we are called into a role of mothering that might, at times, need to be just as reckless and just as creative.*

## John 19.25-27

<sup>25</sup>Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman,<sup>[a]</sup> here is your son," <sup>27</sup>and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

*As if further evidence were required to indicate that God calls us again and again into life-giving, meaningful, creative and dynamic relationships with one another and the world, here Jesus hands his mother and his best friend over to each other and leaves them in no doubt that they are responsible for one another. Who are you responsible for? And who is responsible for you?*

## Sermon



*Ophelia Painting by Millais*

Long, long ago, last week when the world still seemed relatively sane, I was preparing the Churches Together Lent Study material to accompany this Sunday's gospel. I had chosen the painting of Ophelia by Millais because it spoke to me of loss, of letting go, of losing hold of what had seemed certain and stable.

And, though it may not be the first thing that comes to mind, Mothering Sunday is all about letting go.

The two mother's scripture gives us to reflect upon both let go of their sons into situations of threat and danger. Moses' mother, having held onto her child so tightly since his birth, must lose him to the waters of the Nile not knowing what his fate will be. Whilst Mary gives her son up to disgrace and death.

Mothering Sunday has always been a chance for us to invite the community into our church and our faith: to celebrate so much that is beautiful and generous and life giving: our young people, the coming of the spring, the generosity of community, and the desire to share; to give thanks for all that is nurturing and caring around us, to pour out blessing on all those who undertake the work of mothering: male and female, families and individuals, those who care for our elderly, welcome our homeless, support our suffering.

This year, for the first time, we will not be able to open our doors and it is heart breaking.

It feels as if we are losing a great deal: the joy of human communion; the ability to reach out a touch; the security of daily routine; the certainty of jobs and livelihoods.

We are cannot picture our future, we are at a loss, we are grieving.

Neither Moses' mother nor Jesus' mother could foresee any good outcome: they did not give up their sons by choice. They would have given everything to hold onto what they had.

Yet ... yet new life always seems to feel a bit like dying.

The word that struck me most in reading these stories afresh this week was the word "take". In the story of Moses "take this child" in the story of Jesus "take this woman". And they are taken, strangers, foreigners, old, young, male, female, they are taken into the family of another to be loved and cherished protected, nurtured, to be mothered.

These are not stories of protecting our own, circling wagons stuffed full of dried pasta and toilet tissue, these are stories of reaching out of the familial circle and embracing the other, of pulling in the one on the edge, of promising safety in the face of danger.

Every person in these is stories is at risk.

Their actions are not motivated by a desire for security and certainty or by hope of any gain.

They are motivated solely by love.

Mothering Sunday is all about letting go.

But it is also about taking up.

Taking up what seems fruitless and hopeless.

Take this child then, take this grieving mother,

take this stranger, take this foreigner,

take this neighbour you have never spoken more than a few words to,

take this relative you've always found so irritating,

take this opportunity to reach out as far as you can bring yourself to, and then a little further,

take this risk of daring to live out of love and not out of fear.

## **Prayers**

Let us pray to God who gives us life and keeps his promises forever.

We thank you that you promise us  
that you will always bring new life out of our darkness and difficult.  
So we pray for your world; for all leaders of peoples and all in authority, that they would be good mothers, caring for the needs all of their people; working to heal, restore, reconcile, build up and preserve.

Lord of Love  
**Hear our prayer**

We thank you that you promise us  
That your blessings will be as countless as the stars of the sky.

So we pray for the church, that we and all of your people, that we would shine as stars in our community, generating the light of peace and compassion, love and service.

Lord of Love

**Hear our prayer**

We thank you that you promise us

That you will guide us along life's path and help us not to lose our way

So we pray for our community, that you would give us wisdom in this time of isolation and insecurity to know how to care for those in need.

Lord of Love

**Hear our prayer**

We thank you that you promise us

That you will strengthen and support us in one another

So we pray for ourselves, that you would bind us together that we might fulfil your promises and make them real in the lives of those around us.

Lord of Love

**Hear our prayer**

We thank you for our mothers, for all those who have mothered us,

And for our mother the church, who gathers us together to mother one another

And sends us out to mother your world

Mercifully mother and father of us all

**Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**