

St Marys 10.30am Mothering Sunday 6 March 2016

BIBLE READINGS: Exodus 2 v1-10 John 19 v25-27 Colossians 3 v12-17

**We all know that the defining role of a mother is to give birth to a child.** To conceive, to carry and to give birth to a living child.

So it is of interest that two of our lectionary-set Bible Readings for Mothering Sunday are stories of women who care for "substitute sons", sons they have NOT given birth to.

In Exodus 2, Pharaoh's daughter becomes mother to Moses.

In John 19, Mary the Mother of our LORD becomes mother to St John, the Gospel writer, after Jesus is crucified.

So our Bible Readings today point us to the value of "mothering". NOT of giving birth BUT of caring and nurturing and sustaining another person's life so they may flourish.

There is a new term, apparently, for this. **The term is a "FICTIVE" Family.**

A term recently coined by Prof O'Loughlin of Nottingham University.

A 'Fictive' family is a new family brought together and 'formed' (the Latin meaning of 'fictive') by circumstances, rather than 'created' biologically.

So the circumstances of Moses birth were that, because the Hebrew people were flourishing in Egypt, Pharaoh passed a decree that no male child should live. All infant boys had to be killed (Exodus 1 v22). So when the baby Moses is born he is kept hidden for a while and then he is placed in the River Nile in a tarred basket that will float.

He is placed there just before Pharaoh's daughter and her friends come to the Nile to bathe. By a piece of clever scheming, Moses own mother is able to breast-feed him and continues to care for him *and be paid for it!* until weaned and **then Pharaoh's daughter takes him into Pharaoh's Palace and rears him as her royal son. He is given a full royal upbringing.**

-He would have learnt the Egyptian language, been given a full Egyptian education, been educated in all the ways of Pharaoh's Court and the ways of diplomacy and how to deal with Kings and royal officials.

Moses lived the life of a son of Pharaoh for 40 years.

He then lived the life of a Shepherd for 40 years after he had to flee for his life after killing a man who was beating a Hebrew worker.

(2)

**SO, after 80 years, Moses is FULLY EQUIPPED to do his life's work and lead the Hebrew people out of slavery to the Promised Land.**

Fully equipped because he knew BOTH what it was like to be a nobody and be oppressed AND because he knew all about the privileged life in Pharaoh's Palace.

Fully equipped to work another 40 years in the Wilderness bearing the burden of leading an awkward and grumbling people to the Promised Land.

**WITHOUT THE MOTHERING Pharaoh's daughter gave him HE COULD NOT HAVE DONE his life's work.**

He wouldn't have had the skill or the confidence to face Pharaoh and argue with him and stand up to him.

He wouldn't have had the language skills or the diplomacy.

It was crucial to his life's work that he was mothered and nurtured in royal circles in a fictive family. That he had the breeding and confidence and ability of a Prince.

**Without the mothering Pharaoh's daughter gave him he would have been unknown to history.** As it turned out, he became one of the world's greatest leaders.

**Likewise, who knows what would have happened to ST JOHN?**

Presumably his own parents were dead.

And there he is at Calvary watching Jesus die in agony on the cross.

John was "the beloved disciple". The disciple Jesus loved above all others.

So, presumably, John's grief was greater than all the others.

**Jesus recognised that John would need special help to cope and so he entrusted John to the care of his own Mother.**

-She helped him to grieve.

-She gave him hope.

-She kept him together and stopped him falling apart.

She laid the foundation for his future ministry as an Apostle.

(3)

**But it isn't just about Moses and John.**

On Mothering Sunday our Scriptures teach us that we can all, female AND male, mother others and support them and encourage and help them to grow and develop.

**We are ALL in the business of NURTURING.**

And Colossians 3 tells us how we may do this.

WE NEED:

- Compassion
- Kindness
- Humility
- Gentleness
- Patience
- The ability to forgive and not hold grudges
- And, above all, love

**These virtues are the good soil in which useful lives are nurtured.**

THESE ARE THE WAYS WE CAN care and nurture and sustain other people so their lives may flourish.

**We are ALL, female and male, single and married, we are all called to the task of 'mothering'.**

Not just today but throughout the year.