

## 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021 Fourth Sunday in Lent Mothering Sunday

### Readings

Exodus 2:1 - 10

Psalm 34: 11 - 20

2 Timothy 1: 3 - 7

Luke 2:33 - 35



### Costly Motherhood

Today's Bible Readings are those for Mother's Day. They express the important part mothers play in preparing their children to live that best and most fulfilled life to which God has called them. That's not to exclude the role of father – we will talk of that on another day.

One of the first Bible stories we hear as children is this one from the Old Testament – *Moses in the Bullrushes*. It's a lovely account of a baby being saved by a beautiful Egyptian princess, following an horrific decree by her father, the Pharaoh. The princess adopted the baby as her own child and called him Moses – because that name means '*drawn from the water*'. We hear too of the baby's older sister Miriam. Her quick thinking action enables their mother to look after her baby and ensures his safety. But what of their and Aaron's mother? She, Jochebed was married to Amram. Both of them were devout Levites.

Jochebed's story is all too familiarly repeated today where committed Christian mothers look for ways to protect their children from religious persecution in Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Myanmar and over forty other countries. Generations had passed since the Hebrew people had first settled in Egypt and now they were forced into slavery. Their numbers were growing and the king feared rebellion. To decrease their population he ordered the murder of all newborn Hebrew boys. Our knowledge of refugee mothers helps us feel for Jochebed weeping over the pitch-lined baby's cradle as it floated among grasses along the Nile. We sense her fears of discovery; her doubtful trust of neighbours – spending all day at work with her mind on that basket, on Miriam and her baby's future. This was the cost of a devout believer's motherhood!

From the Epistles we hear too of Timothy and his mother. Timothy, to whom this letter is addressed was a sort of godson to Paul. Later he became Paul's companion and a church leader. Timothy came from Lystra and had a mixed Jewish and Greek background. His father was Greek and presumably with pagan origins. Timothy's Hebrew mother Eunice and her mother Lois were among Paul's first converts in that city. I feel sure there could have been some costly conflicts in the family about Timothy having a non Jewish father - we know that his having to be circumcised was a factor in Paul's acceptance of him as his helper because of an element of racism in the religious communities. However we also know that Lois and Eunice were true believers and maintained a home of faith in which Timothy was nurtured and prepared for the ministry God had ordained for him

These scriptures point to the importance of a mother's role in sharing faith within the family and preparing their children for God's purposes. There's another reminder of how costly this calling can be in today's Gospel story - when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to be dedicated in the Temple. Faithful, devoted old Simeon re-affirms what Mary had heard from an angel a year earlier - *'you and your child are chosen by God.'* 'But,' Simeon foretells more - *'It will break your heart!'* At such cost!

Many of us will give thanks today for all we owe to our mothers. Younger members of our family have been delving into our ancestry. They found me no titles or hidden pots of gold, but I realise how, as far back as great-grandparents, both Pamela and myself could give thanks that a number of mothers on both sides had been part of God's preparation of us for our shared ministry. We give thanks. Today is a day to remember the costly devotion of our mothers in enabling our faith so that we were ready to say 'yes' when God was ready.

It may not be easy today for mothers to say, like the psalmist - *'listen!'* *'listen to our words about life and faith'*, but that does not preclude giving a faithful example for them to SEE, nor giving them the assurance *'I pray for you'*. Whatever it costs.

### **A Prayer** [with Mother's day in our thoughts]

*We will walk the path  
That will cost us much  
And embrace the pain and sorrow;  
We will trust in One who entrusts to us  
The disciples of tomorrow.*

*[Singing the Faith 662]*

