

**Readings: Exodus 2:1-10  
John 19:25b-27**

For some people Mothering Sunday can be tinged with sadness. Perhaps our childhoods haven't been the best, or as parents ourselves we have struggled in difficult circumstances. Some people have wanted families but not been fortunate enough to have them, and for a lot of us we miss our Mums because they have died. If you are in that position then I want to say that we acknowledge those memories you may have today.

But on a lighter note I also want to say 'well done Mums' to all of you who have brought up children in an atmosphere of love, despite the many frustrations all parents experience at times.

Our Bible readings depict the hardships of motherhood in a way that many of us would find too hard to bear, but they contain the emotions that God himself experiences. As a Father, God knows and demonstrates all the qualities of parenthood that we experience whether as Mums or as Dads. As Christians we are his adopted children. He suffers when we suffer, and he knew suffering as he watched Jesus die on the Cross. He could have intervened but didn't because of the love he had for us, his creation.

Let's look first of all at the story of Moses in our Old Testament reading. Pharaoh obviously had a huge immigration problem. The good that Joseph had brought to Egypt was forgotten. Joseph and his generation had all died, and now the Israelites had grown to vast numbers and Pharaoh felt threatened. He took the drastic step of ordering his people to throw into the Nile all baby boys born to the Hebrews.

It is into this atmosphere of hatred that Moses was born. His mother tried her best to hide him for three months, but then what was she to do? Did she have to pretend that he too was a victim of the punishment given to the Hebrew baby boys? If so she would still do her best to protect him. She placed him in a basket that was coated in tar and pitch, to keep it water tight, and the basket was placed amongst the reeds so it wouldn't be dislodged and travel down the Nile. Did she hope that he would be found by someone who would care for him? Did she know it was an area where Pharaoh's daughter went to bathe? It was still a risk and I suspect she was heavy hearted, and unable to

watch what would happen. His sister took on that task of watching from a distance.

We of course know the outcome. Pharaoh's daughter found him, took pity on him, and decided to care for him. With irony his sister Miriam suggested getting someone to nurse him, and as a result Moses' mother is reunited with her son and gets paid in the process. It may have all been pre-planned, and if so the plan certainly worked.

There is in this Bible story a demonstration of compassion and love exercised by women compelled to protect the vulnerable in the face of cruel actions. Love wins out. Pharaoh's daughter decides to protect the Hebrew child despite her father, Miriam skilfully suggests the help of a Hebrew nurse, and Moses' Mother is literally given the job of looking after him. Despite horrendous situations it is the quality of compassion in a Mother's love that has the last word.

Moving forward to the Gospel reading we see again the pain experienced in a Mother's love as Jesus' mother stands before the Cross watching the suffering of her son.

We are reminded of Simeon's words when Mary and Joseph had presented the baby Jesus before the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem. Simeon had spoken prophetically about Jesus' future role and had said to Mary that a sword would pierce her soul too. Now those words ring true as she watches Jesus dying on the Cross. Others had run away out of fear and despair, but Mary stayed, along with Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene and John the disciple.

Even whilst dying on the Cross Jesus acknowledges her plight and places her into the care of John the disciple. We may wonder what had happened to her own family, her other children. Where were they? She was the one who had received past insight into who Jesus really was, and maybe his brothers had yet to come on board on their own faith journey, probably as they experienced the future reality of the Resurrection. But for now she stood before her dying son. It is the quality of a mother's love that is willing to stand by to support her child, no matter what the circumstances.

Moses had been in danger of death in the river Nile but had survived. Jesus died on the Cross but rose to live for ever more. Moses had been used

by God to deliver the chosen people from the hand of Pharaoh. Jesus would deliver his followers into eternal life. But the mothers in the Biblical stories played a huge part in that deliverance.

Mothers protect in the face of adversity and exercise love and compassion, caring more for their offspring than for themselves, as these stories illustrate. So on this Mothering Sunday let's say thank you to all mothers who selflessly care for others amidst both the joys and the sorrows of this life.