

Talk for Mothering Sunday by Martin Le Fleming

Today is Mothering Sunday, a day when mothers and Mother Church are honoured. In Exodus we hear of the birth of Moses. The Jews are in Egypt and being oppressed by pharaoh who felt threatened by immigration, a feeling also present today. Moses's mother hides him for as long as she can. Then she hides him in a papyrus basket and leaves him at the edge of the river, with his sister keeping an eye on him. Pharaoh's daughter finds the basket with Moses inside. She feels for him, realises he is one of the Jews. Moses's sister approaches her to see if she wants a nurse for the child, and Moses's mother is paid to be the nurse. When Moses grows up, his mother takes him to Pharaoh's daughter, who treats him as her son.

A complicated story of motherhood, which resonates today where family relationships are not always straight forward, but mother love shines through.

The Gospel reading from John is the crucifixion, and who is there? Not many, many have dropped away. But one who has not fallen away is Mary the mother of Jesus. Mary who says yes to God, Mary who nurtures Jesus, Mary whose love will not always be easy or pain free, Mary who is at the foot of the cross, what more painful time than this? The love of all mothers is not without sorrow and pain. It is a love that cares.

This is a love that God has for all of us, the love that mothers have. In Luke's gospel Jesus compares himself to a hen who gathers her brood under her wings. Indeed Mother Julian of Norwich is granted by God a series of revelations on the 8th of May 1373 while gravely ill, having been given the last rites. In this night Jesus is seen at points as mother. In chapter 60 "we are brought back and fulfilled by the mercy and grace of our sweet kind and ever loving mother Jesus. The attributes of Motherhood, Jesus our true mother feeds us not with milk but with himself, opening his side to us, and calling out all our love."

These revelations were submitted to mother church and found to be true and worthy of wider use. She went on to be an anchorite in Norwich, meditating on these revelations for the rest of her life.

So today we honour mother church and mothers. Mother love is everlasting. We all have mothers, some of us are mothers, Jesus has the nature of motherhood. We celebrate this love, the love that Mary showed to Jesus, that was costly, there at the foot of the cross.

So let us all give thanks to God for mothers and mother love.

Amen