**Sunday 22nd March**

**Lent 4 – Mothering Sunday**

**Collect:**

God of love,
passionate and strong,
tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Reading:**

*God’s will to save his people is worked out through the agency of a mother – even in the most challenging of times.*

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, ‘Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.’ Therefore, they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labour. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ‘When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.’ But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. So, the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, ‘Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?’ The midwives said to Pharaoh, ‘Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.’ So, God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, ‘Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.’

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. ‘This must be one of the Hebrews’ children,’ she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, ‘Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?’ Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, ‘Yes.’ So, the girl went and called the child’s mother. Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, ‘Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.’ So, the woman took the child and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, ‘because’, she said, ‘I drew him out of the water.’

*Exodus 1:8 – 2:10*

**Hymns:**

For the beauty of earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which, from our birth,
Over and around us lies.

 *Lord of all to thee we raise
 This our joyful hymn of praise.*

For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth and friends above,
pleasures pure and undefiled.

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For Mary, Mother of the Lord,

God’s holy name be praised,

Who first the Son of God adored,

As on her child she gazed.

Brave, holy Virgin, she believed,

Though hard the task assigned,

And by the holy Ghost conceived

The Saviour of mankind.

*On Wednesday this week (25th) we remember the* ***Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary***

*Luke 1:26-38… only 9 months till Christmas!*