

## **CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 96**

### **Mothering Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**'Virtually Church but with some way to go...'**

#### **Welcome**

Welcome to this Sunday's edition of Cutting Edge Camelot. On this Mothering Sunday Ron reflects below on the insights that various Biblical stories give us into the joys and demands of motherhood. We also give an update on Bishop Peter.

#### **Reflection**

One of the great comic stereotypes is the Jewish Mother. I love the one who stood up in the theatre and shouted *is there a doctor in the house?* And a man calls, *Yes, I'm a doctor!* And she says, *you want to meet a nicely brought up Jewish girl?* Jewish mother wants nothing but the best for her children. Maureen Lipman did a whole series of adverts for British Telecom as Beattie - BT, get it? the Jewish mother who can't really let go. Perfect for selling telephone services. But we all know how it is once our children leave home. They move house, and in a sense you know about it, but they don't consult you, or ask your advice, or even ask you to help packing or decorating. They'll tell you casually they've bought a new car when you can remember when they didn't buy a pair of trousers without you being there. Part of us says this is what we brought them up to be, free and independent, while another part mourns the loss of our chicks.

There are huge expectations placed on mothers these days, and on their relationships with their children. We admire the career woman, and we admire the mother, but the woman who can do both well is a real paragon. And with increasing equality in the workplace for women and men, the same

demands are being made of fathers as well. Parent's lives are expected to revolve around their children. Those who have home schooled their children when the schools were closed have had some difficult juggling to do. But when there is normality, there is no let up. You have to drive them to ballet, archery, rugby and whatever else they do after school. And when they get girlfriends, they make it quite clear that if you can't drive them to Wimborne now, this very minute, it's their whole life you're fouling up. And if you don't do all this, you get looked at as if you're a bit odd. I read a very funny book called *May Contain Nuts* where the parents of a little girl decide that on Thursday afternoons, between school and dinner, they aren't going to plan anything for her. And the other parents are amazed. What will she do? Whatever she wants. What if she gets bored?

One of our daughters-in-law made it clear she never wanted children. And people said, presumably to comfort us, *Oh, there's time - she might change her mind yet*. And she didn't. She is one of those unusual women who really don't feel motherhood is for them.

The Bible, on the whole, is fairly unsentimental about motherhood. At the time it was written, producing a child who lived to adulthood was a challenge in itself. The Old Testament regards children as a blessing from God to be welcomed and celebrated, and assumes that in the extended family, each generation will look after the next in turn. What a man wants is a bunch of sons like arrows in a quiver. What a mother wants, is daughters to care for her in her old age. Not having children is seen as a disgrace.

But the Bible also recognises that motherhood is demanding. Eve is warned of the trauma, physical and emotional, that becoming a mother entails - this is the explanation Genesis gives us of why humans make such a to-do having children when animals just drop their young.

*Reading: Exodus 2: 1 - 10*

*Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. <sup>2</sup> The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.*

*<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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.*

*<sup>7</sup> 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?"*

*<sup>8</sup> Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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."*

Jochebed, Moses mother, had no idea how it would turn out when she put her baby in a little wicker boat and put him in the river. He might have been eaten by crocodiles, or drowned, or stuck in the reeds until he starved. But she knew that if she kept him, he would die. So she was prepared to take that slim chance. To give him up herself, to give him the chance of life. The fact that he was found by the oppressors was a miracle, and the fact that she had the blessing of nursing him, feeding him, and being his mother again, was a greater blessing than she could have imagined.

*Reading I Samuel 1: 21 – 22, 24 - 28*

*The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow. <sup>22</sup> But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, “As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the LORD, and remain there forever; I will offer him as a nazirite for all time.”*

*<sup>24</sup> When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young. <sup>25</sup> Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. <sup>26</sup> And she said, “Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. <sup>27</sup> For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him. <sup>28</sup> Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD.” She left him there for the LORD.*

Hannah, distraught from the stigma of not having children, was finally granted her wish, but she gave the child Samuel back to God when he was a small boy. She only saw him once a year when she went to the holy place where he lived, and gave him the new coat she’s made him, as he grew. Isn’t that a sad image? Hannah couldn’t do all the regular things a mother would do for a child, because she took seriously her vow to God.

*Reading I Kings 3: 16 - 27*

*Later, two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. <sup>17</sup> The one woman said, “Please, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth while she was in the house. <sup>18</sup> Then on the third day after I gave birth, this woman also gave birth. We were together; there was no one else with us in the house, only the two of us were in the house.*

*19 Then this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on him. 20 She got up in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your servant slept. She laid him at her breast, and laid her dead son at my breast. 21 When I rose in the morning to nurse my son, I saw that he was dead; but when I looked at him closely in the morning, clearly it was not the son I had borne."*

*22 But the other woman said, "No, the living son is mine, and the dead son is yours." The first said, "No, the dead son is yours, and the living son is mine." So they argued before the king.*

*23 Then the king said, "The one says, 'This is my son that is alive, and your son is dead'; while the other says, 'Not so! Your son is dead, and my son is the living one.'"*

*24 So the king said, "Bring me a sword," and they brought a sword before the king. 25 The king said, "Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other."*

*26 But the woman whose son was alive said to the king – because compassion for her son burned within her – "Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!" The other said, "It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it."*

*27 Then the king responded: "Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother."*

Think of that unnamed mother that Solomon had to deal with, who would have given her baby up to another woman rather than see him harmed. She wasn't a good woman, and neither was the other. They were both prostitutes. I don't know whether that carried then the same connotations it would now. But to save her child, she would give him up to a woman worse

than she was. The woman who would have seen the baby hurt couldn't possibly have been his mother.

And then there's Mary, the mother of Jesus, having to watch as her boy grows away from her, creates a new family for himself of fishermen, tax-collectors, zealots and builders, that excludes her and her other children. Then Jesus wilfully puts himself in danger, and finally is painfully executed. Mary didn't have to be there and watch, but how could she not be? No wonder Simeon told her, right at the start, that a sword would pierce her soul. But like Hannah, and Jochebed, Mary knows that the best things parents can do for their children is to let them go and do what they have to do for themselves.

God is spoken of in the Bible as a Father, but also occasionally as a mother. We have the image from Isaiah of God as a mighty warrior, fighting alongside his people in battle, and then immediately after as a woman in labour, crying out with the pain of producing children. If good human parents know that they need to let go and let their children be free to be who they are and make their own way, how much more must God our Father, our Mother, know that same truth. He loves to hear from us, and wants us to involve him in our lives. But he leaves us free, and that includes free to screw up if we're going to.

Sometimes we're tempted to make the parenthood of God an excuse to adopt a childish attitude to our relationship with God. We expect God to tell us what to do, to answer all our prayers and manage out life for us. As God's children, we duck out of our responsibilities. We go to church to be told what to think and how to behave, and avoid the hard work of thinking and decision-making that goes with being an adult.

But God is a good parent, one who knows about giving up control and letting children grow up. God wants us to be adults, to make our own choices, even if that means we make a mess of things. Of course, God

wants us to keep in touch regularly, talk about what's gone right and what's gone wrong, and get a fresh perspective. God is still, as it were, waiting for the phone to ring.

*Ron*

### **News of Bishop Peter**

Bishop Peter has written to thank everyone for their prayers, support and encouragement. He says he is getting much stronger and seems to be recovering well. However, following doctor's advice and after much prayer and reflection he has come to the conclusion that he needs to take early retirement on medical grounds. Plans for a retirement service are yet to be finalised although this may take place on Pentecost Sunday marking Bishop Peter's seven years as our Diocesan bishop.

### **Big Church Read**

The Big Church Read is a great opportunity to bring Christians together across the country to read books together. It contains online videos, reading plans and discussion questions to enhance the reading experience. The current book chosen for reading and discussion is Singing in Babylon: Finding purpose in life's second choices by Jeff Lucas. For more information please see:- <https://thebigchurchread.co.uk/>

### **Giving in Lent**

The Kisumu Children Trust is a charity for children in Kenya. The Camelot Group has supported this charity in previous Lents and we would like to do so once again in this Lent.

Our parishioners in Galhampton, Mike and Katherine Dare, have been trustees and actively involved with Kisumu for a number of years. They write as follows:-

‘2020 has been a challenging year for Kisumu Children, as with all charities, and of course for our churches across Camelot, though thankfully Kenya has thus far been saved from the extreme ravages caused by Covid-19. In addition, an initiative sponsored by UNICEF and the Kenyan Government is requiring us to redirect the Christian love, care and witness we provide in our children’s home towards continuing to support the children in this way but in their own rural homes or with extended families rather than in our home. This will be a real challenge for our ministry over the coming years and may well see us working more closely with local churches in Kisumu and the local school. We hope too to be able to facilitate a link between the local school there and the North Cadbury school here, which we know Lisa would like to achieve, once Covid pressures have reduced.’

If you wish to give an online donation the BACS details are: The Kisumu Children Trust; Sort Code 40-52-40; Account no. 00011583. The charity banks with CAF Bank. Could you please include the reference “Camelot” on donations made by BACS. Gift Aid authorisations can also be provided for completion if requested.

Please make cheques payable to Kisumu Children and send them to:-  
Kisumu Children Trust, The Old Post Office, 1, Thorpe Avenue, Tonbridge, TN10 4PW.

### **Points for Prayers**

- Thanksgiving for mothers and their work
- Planning for what we might do as a church at Easter



- Give thanks for progress in the roll out of the different vaccines in combating coronavirus and for the falling rates of infection
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes
- Those suffering from coronavirus in hospitals, care homes and at home
- Bishop Peter in his decision to take early retirement and Bishop Ruth as she continues to shoulder additional responsibilities in the diocese
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and other local schools as they have now reopened
- For the work of Kisumu Children Trust
- Prayers for those who are lonely or housebound and for those who may be doing all right but who are really missing everyday social interaction in shops, the street or over the garden fence
- Prayers for those affected economically by the lockdown, for businesses and those who have become unemployed
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

### **Suspension of services**

Services across the Camelot Group have now been suspended as sadly we concluded that it was not possible to hold them safely in the current circumstances. We are reviewing this suspension of services and in particular what we might do at Easter.

### **Excalibur**

The March edition of Excalibur is now online at [camelotparishes.co.uk](http://camelotparishes.co.uk)

## **The Parish Office**

The Parish Office is closed although Rob does come in regularly. In his absence please contact Rob via email ([office@camelotparishes.org.uk](mailto:office@camelotparishes.org.uk)) or on 01749 850934.

## **An inclusive Communion celebrated on behalf of the benefice**

During the third lockdown as in the others Ron and Pam will be celebrating Communion regularly in their home each Sunday at 10.00 am. Please be aware of this because even though no-one can join them they are praying for us all and hope that you will feel included in this act of Communion.

*Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family*

*We pray that 'we might live in love,  
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5:2)