

THROUGH CHILDREN'S EYES: FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

3 March 2016

Young girls love princesses. There is no news in that statement. Our seven-year old artist, Julia, has focused on the rescue of the infant Moses from his reed basket in the crocodile infested waters of an Egyptian river by the daughter of the Pharaoh who “drew him up” out of his basket, saving him, adopting him into the royal family, and ensuring the salvation of the man who, when grown, will lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt, through the waters of the Red Sea and into their own salvation in the Promised Land. We are told that the verb, to be drawn up, in the language of the princess was “Moses”.

But in the moment of this drawing, the artist has captured the infant Moses and the adolescent princess of the royal court. No others are featured, no hand maids, no older sister of Moses watching nearby, no crocodiles, and no court ladies in waiting or bath attendants. Just the princess and the baby. A Mosaic nativity scene and the babe, wrapped in swaddling bands floating, resting near his new found mother. St Paul will later call Jesus the new Moses... here our artist allows the kind hearted Egyptian princess to prefigure the new Mary.

And our artist, Julia, has minimized the setting. There are no heavy reeds, lotus blossoms, or North African water creatures to give us context. There are no nearby pyramids or Egyptian court buildings. This allows our scene to be anywhere, even the plantless, salty shores of the Sea of the Arabah on the Jordan River so close to Manger Square in Bethlehem.

This is a portrait, not of a place, or a time, or even of a royal court – this is a portrait of a mother, a royal mother, meeting her baby for the first time. This is a documentation of a moment of salvation – of her, of him and of all those who trace their faith on a man who was drawn up out of the living waters of new life.

Here is the age appropriate scripture for this Sunday upon which Julia has based her work:

SUNDAY 6 MARCH – MOTHERING SUNDAY

Times were very tough. Families were told that they were not allowed to have any more children. The parents might go to jail if they had a child since the government had made it illegal.

A woman and man, wife and husband, were somewhat relieved that they already had a wonderful daughter when the law came into effect but then they found out that she was pregnant again and that she was going to have a baby boy. They were very worried about what would happen. Everything went OK until the baby was born, but things didn't become easier. The baby cried sometimes and made noise and also needed special baby food. It was very clear that an illegal baby was living there. The baby was very healthy and strong and the parents were able to hide him for three months.

After that, they could no longer keep him in the house so they decided to hide him on the river bank. The mother took a basket and lined it with tar and oil to make it waterproof. She then wrapped the baby in warm blankets and floated him out for a while.

His older sister was told to watch from a distance to make sure he was safe, but the basket floated away from her and sailed a short way down the river to where some young women were swimming. They

were from the king's house. The king's daughter saw the baby and drew him up (picked him up) out of the water. She saw how young and healthy he was and realised he must be an illegal baby. She decided to adopt the baby and make sure he was safe. She called him Moses, because Moses means "to be drawn out" in their language.

The king's daughter, the princess, realized that she would need a servant girl to help care for the baby. Just then, the boy's sister came up to her and asked if she needed a good servant girl to help with the baby. "Yes", the kind princess said, "but you are too young." "My mother could do it," she said, "she is trying to find some work and she is a good mother to me." "That is an excellent idea," said the kind princess. And so the baby grew up to be a handsome and smart young man with two mothers who both loved him very much.

