

**Reflection for February 13, 2008**  
**Primary Readings: Exodus 1:1 – 2:10 & Hebrews 11:23**

*Delivered.* In one word it's the story of this "Holy Moses." In one word it's the story of God's chosen people – the Hebrews... In one word it's the story of the whole bible from cover to cover... and in this way, through the Word of God, we remember that it's our story as well, told with just one word: "Delivered!"

There are, of course, lots of different kinds of "delivery." There's the delivery of a package from your sister by way of UPS to your mailbox. You can get a pizza delivered from Pizza Hut. The "delivery person" is the one who helps moves something from one place to another place.

Jesus, also, when he teaches us to pray says, "...and lead us not into temptation, but *deliver us from evil.*" Have you ever thought about what it might mean to *be delivered?*

There is, of course, at least one more kind of "delivery." The kind of delivery which Elisabeth and I are keenly aware could happen any moment. And this type of delivery turns our attention to two characters in our story this evening: Shiphrah and Puah. They are two midwives, literally they are two women who help in the "delivery" of babies.

You might think me strange, but these two women with hard to pronounce names are actually two of my favorite characters in the whole bible. I even considered them as possible names for a baby – don't you think *Shiphrah* and *Puah* just roll off the tongue? ...At any rate, these two midwives are some of my favorite characters, because at the risk of losing their own lives they just *keep on doing what they know how to do – helping others be delivered!*

Remember – they're called by Pharaoh to answer why they've been disobeying him, why they've been delivering the Hebrew babies. And their answer is cunningly creative, "Well, the Hebrew women aren't like the Egyptian women... they have a *vigor of life* and give birth before we get there." They unashamedly keep doing the work they sense they're called to do. Perhaps they've got a trust that things are going to work out through thick and thin... They know that *they'll be delivered*, so they continue to *help others be delivered.*

And in the story it's a bit like dominoes. The midwives begin a chain of *delivery* which will continue throughout our story in the weeks ahead. Because of the midwives, a baby's *delivered* to a Hebrew woman... then the next domino falls and the baby's *delivered* a second time passing on a basket of reeds through the dangerous crocodile infested Nile river... and this baby – the hero of our story – is named to reflect this.

*Moses* (or *Mosheh* in Hebrew) – *the one who was “drawn out” or “delivered”* (*mashah* in Hebrew). And this Moses, we'll find as our story unfolds with more and more dominoes, this Moses eventually helps deliver an entire people, the Hebrew people, from slavery and oppression.

And in a way, the dominoes keep falling. This story of “Holy Moses” a story of *delivery* becomes the foundation for the story of Jesus *delivering us into freedom*. And the dominoes don't stop there. African American slaves in this country were *delivered* partly through singing spirituals like ‘*Go Down Moses*’ sometimes being sung to literally signal that *delivery* was imminent. Or more recently, the Civil Rights Movement sang folk tunes like the ‘*Little Moses*’ we sang as a gathering song – stories and songs of *delivery*.

I wonder if this “Little Moses” this “Holy Moses” was himself called to *deliver* because he had once *been delivered*. Because in a word, I think this is exactly what happens... It's like the old children's song and verse from 1 John 4:19 says, “We love, because God first loved us.” In the same way this is the kind of life which God calls us to – *we help deliver others because we were first delivered*.

I often think it'd be nice if God delivered us *from* suffering, *from* oppression, or *from* pain. Instead, I invite you to pay attention to the story in the weeks ahead. It's a story where God doesn't always deliver *from*, but God does always deliver *through*...

God delivers people forced into slavery *through* oppression to freedom... God delivers the broken-hearted *through* pain to wholeness... God delivers those who have lost loved ones *through* a sea of grief into peace... God delivers the sick *through* suffering towards healing... God delivers the poor *through* a broken system which allows for poverty to a new promised land where no one goes hungry and no one lacks adequate housing...

And so we begin our journey through Lent and through this story of Moses – a journey and a story of delivery. Amen.