

The model of motherhood

Georgina Byrne *reflects on* 1 Samuel 1:20-end

What makes a good mother? Was Hannah a good mother, praying desperately for a child, only then to leave him in the care of an old priest? Was Moses' mother good, putting him in a basket on the river? Or even Mary, who failed to notice that she and Joseph had left Jesus behind in the Temple when he was only twelve? If we want an image of perfect motherhood – the sort that conforms to the high standards of greetings cards – then the Bible is not a good place to look.

The Bible does not provide us with models of motherhood, though – it offers us images of women and men who are obedient to God. Hannah is not

simply a woman wanting a child – she is a prayerful servant of the Lord and a prophet. In her prayer (in the following chapter) she gives voice to a whole people and points to the anointing of David as king. Her son, still a small child at this moment, is Samuel, who will anoint first Saul and then David.

Like Mary, who said “yes” because she saw the promise of salvation, and the nameless woman who saved Moses by risking losing him, Hannah recognised God's faithfulness – and she put her trust in God. These biblical mothers are not role models for motherhood – they are models for all men and women. Trust in God, who is faithful. 🙏



Faithful God, you know our need before we ask it and hear the longings of our heart. Teach us to trust you, to know you as our strength, and to tell out your greatness to children's children now and for ever more. Amen.

Lesser-known Bible characters

Absalom

by Caroline Fletcher

Anyone who thinks only flawless families appear in the Bible should read the dramatic story of King David's son Absalom.

Absalom seemed the perfect child: he was charming, bright and handsome with luxuriant hair. However tragedy led him down a dark path. Absalom's sister was raped by another of David's sons. Angry that David failed to avenge her, Absalom had his brother murdered and fled the country.

After a number of years, Absalom was allowed home, but things between father and son remained tense. Absalom won over the people and incited a rebellion against his father. David wrote Psalm 3 at this time describing “tens of thousands” united against him.

Absalom, however, came to an undignified end. His head, or possibly his long locks, became caught in a tree as he rode beneath. Despite Absalom's betrayal, David was grief-stricken. The Bible truly reflects real life: parenting is far from easy! 🙏

“Lent is like a long retreat during which we can turn back into ourselves and listen to the voice of God, in order to defeat the temptations of the Evil One.”

Pope Benedict XVI

A Lenten Camino

Part 5 – blessing on the journey

by Sr Janet Fearn

The twelfth-century church of Santiago is the oldest in A Coruña. It is also at the very beginning of the English Way of the pilgrimage route to Compostela. There, in a tiny Lady Chapel, is an exquisite statue of Our Lady, heavily pregnant. Mary's left hand rests on her abdomen in the same way that countless women throughout history have felt the movements of the little one in their womb. Mary feels the unborn Jesus and smiles. She raises her right hand in blessing. It's a wonderful example of folk art and theology

“from the bottom up”. Mary is in contact with her son and his blessing passes to us through his mother's hands. This motif of Mary blessing us through her pregnancy is seen again and again throughout Galicia, in churches and on the sides of buildings. For pilgrims on the Camino, Mary blesses every step that they take.

Do I allow her to be part of my journey through Lent towards Easter? Do I let Jesus bless me through his mother?

Sr Janet's book, *A Lenten Camino*, is available from Redemptorist Publications as an e-book: www.rpbooks.co.uk/-a-lenten-camino 🙏