

Age is just a number

Georgina Byrne *reflects on* Genesis 12:1-4a

Most seventy-five-year-olds might reasonably assume that, after working hard, raising a family and engaging with the local community, they can expect some peace. Poor Abram is not so lucky. At that age God commands him to leave his home and travel to “the land that I will show you” – as yet undisclosed. His wife Sarai and nephew Lot are dragged into this escapade, too. All of this, of course, happens before he fathers two children – first Ishmael with Hagar and then Isaac with Sarai, when he is a hundred years old.

Abram, or Abraham as he becomes, is a man who knows that for God, age is unimportant. When God invites him to an adventure he ups sticks and leaves with all the expectation of an optimistic youngster. He sees the world with fresh eyes, ready to explore and ready to be surprised by what God can do.

Age doesn't matter when we follow God's promptings. When I was Director of Ordinands, the oldest person I presented to the bishop for ordination was sixty-seven. She was, and still is, one of the most vibrant, imaginative and inspiring priests I know. We may not have the energy for moving house or even being ordained, but, whatever our age, we can be challenged and surprised by God in our life if we keep our hearts alive to the possibility. ☺

Three books of law

Part 2 – Numbers

by Gillian Cooper

It starts unpromisingly, with the lists of names that provide its title, but persevere with Numbers and you may find you enjoy it. There are more laws, and a lot of complicated rules for worship in the tabernacle that are really addressed to a later situation. As in Leviticus, these are means by which the people may maintain holiness in relationship with a holy God. But in the middle of the book we get back to the story.

In Numbers God's people do not cover themselves in glory. They regularly complain about the food and water or lack of it, wishing themselves back in Egypt where even slaves were fed. They take fright when they realise that the promised land is already inhabited, and are ready to believe stories of giants. They show that they are not ready to be the people God needs, and God decides that they will travel round the wilderness for a further forty years till they can finally put slavery and Egypt behind them and grow into a mature people. ☺



God of adventure, challenge me. God of life, surprise me. God of compassion, travel with me. Open my eyes and ears, my mind and heart, to the places where I will find you today. Amen.

A Lenten Camino

Part 3 – an uphill trek

by Sr Janet Fearn

Legend says that when Hercules defeated the giant Geryon after a lengthy battle, as a tribute Hercules constructed a tower above the buried head of his opponent. Historically, the Romans who subsequently came to A Coruña found that the port's rocky coastline incredibly dangerous for shipping. As always, the engineers thought of a solution and built a lighthouse on the traditional site of Hercules' construction. In the absence of electricity, a spiral track enabled wagons loaded with firewood to be drawn a further 34m above the 57m-high rock overlooking the

sea to a brazier which could be kept burning to warn seafarers of the lethal underwater rocks. Today's Tower of Hercules remains the world's oldest working lighthouse.

It is a wonderful example of how thought, skill and sheer hard work saved countless lives over the centuries. Might my life, unknowingly, be a beacon of light to others? Might my own struggles to overcome life's challenges reveal new possibilities? If Lent begins with good intentions which might not last, am I willing to start again if I stumble on the way?

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

“Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in Him a source of sustenance beyond food.”

Dallas Willard (1935-2013), American philosopher