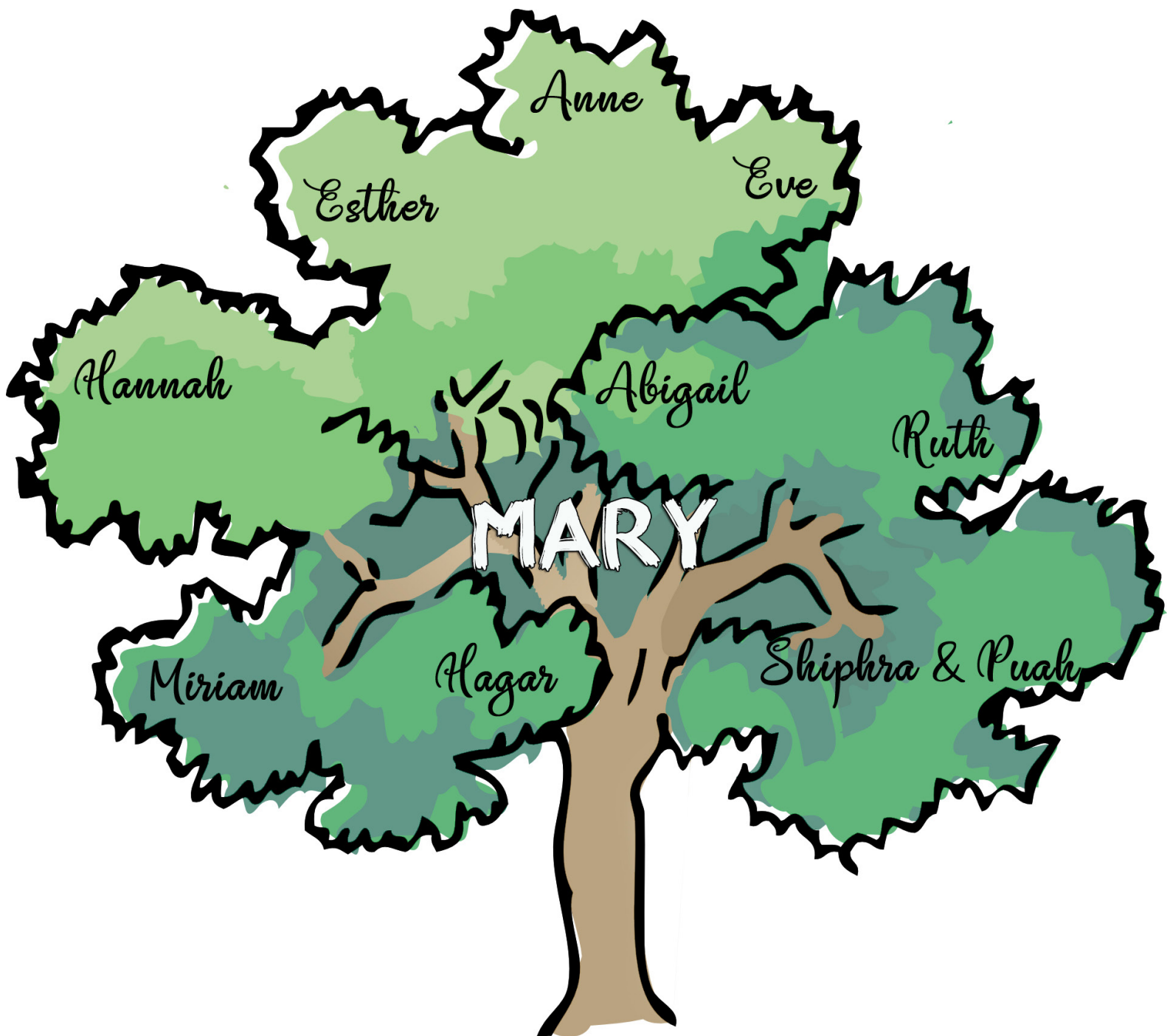


Presentation Day Novena 2021



Introduction

The Child Mary, Pivotal Figure in History

For decades we have delighted in the many images of Mary's presentation as she walked up the steps of the temple. During this novena, let us walk with Mary up the steps and into the temple. With her we listen and are enriched by the stories of the biblical women who have come before her and have made societal changes during very challenging times. Let us call upon our foremothers to help us discover the power within ourselves to bring about justice and peace as we continue to meet "the signs of the times" in our day.

The opening songs, hymns or background music for each day of the novena are to be chosen by each local community.

Prepared by the Conference of Presentation Sisters

Sister Rita Jovick, San Francisco

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Anne, Mother of Mary

According to apocryphal Christian and Islamic tradition, Saint Anne was the mother of Mary and the maternal grandmother of Jesus. Mary's mother is not named in the canonical gospels. Therefore we know very little about Anne and her husband Joachim.

Opening Song

Reading

Though Anne's name is not mentioned in the Bible, we can learn about her from tradition and legends. From these stories we learn that both Mary's mother and father had a tremendous amount of faith. Anne and her husband Joachim were an extremely pious couple, but they were unable to conceive a child. This burden weighed heavily on Joachim's shoulders, so he spent much time fasting and in devout prayer pleading for God to bless him and Anne with a child. According to tradition, Anne also became distraught. She went into her garden and prayed for God to bless her with a child, promising that the child would be dedicated to the service of the Lord. As Anne wept

in prayer, an angel appeared and said to her, "The Lord has looked upon thy tears; thou shalt conceive and give birth and the fruit of thy womb shall be blessed by all the world." Then the angel appeared to Joachim as well, and the couple rejoiced as they conceived a child, whom they named Mary. The Feast of Saint Anne is celebrated on July 26. She is also known as the patron saint of mothers, women in labor and minors.

From Emily Brown, Cultures of Life Studies Program



Reflection

As indicated in the reading, there are some parallels with Anne's life and Mary's such as angel's appearing to Anne and Joachim separately to announce the birth of their child who will be blessed, dedicated to God and part of God's plan for our salvation as the mother of Jesus. The response of each is a faith response of "yes" to God. Saying yes in a time of uncertainty takes tremendous faith. Anne likely mentored Mary teaching her spiritual wisdom. Who are the women who taught you faith/courage? Read again the reading and choose one or more of the following questions for your reflection to share with your group.

Reflection Questions

- What is stirring in your heart as you consider the life of Anne?
- What new learnings did you discover from hearing the story of Anne?
- What touched you in a deeper way while reflecting on her life?
- What connections can you make with her experiences and yours?
- What can Anne and Mary teach us about faith?

Contemplative Silence

Sharing

If you are praying with a group, please take a few moments to share your reflections with one another.

Intercessions

Please respond: *Loving God, hear our cries for mercy and peace!*

- For health and safety of all families who are preparing to welcome a new child, we pray.
- For the children who are being born into a world of conflict and violence, and for women and mothers who suffer needlessly, we pray.
- For all news networks and news casters that they are committed to truth telling and guide us in learning how to respond with the truth, we pray.
- For victims and perpetrators of injustice that justice and peace will prevail for all, we pray.
- For all those who have been forced into unemployment, who long to return to work, for all those who struggle to support their families, we pray.
- For our Presentation People in Africa, we pray.

Closing Prayer

We pray to God with St. Anne for the needs of our times especially for justice and peace in our world. Be with all who suffer, struggle and are caught in the midst of unjust systems. We pray for protection and support for all families, mothers and women who are soon to be mothers. We pray in the name of Jesus! Amen.

Eve, Mother of Cain and Abel

Eve's two sons had a troubled relationship which resulted in one son killing his brother causing Eve to be named the mother of the murdered and the murderer.

Opening Song

Reading

God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. The Lord God said: "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." So the Lord God cast a deep sleep on the man, And while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord God then built up into a woman the rib he had taken from the man. The man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced a man with the help

of the Lord." Next she bore his brother Abel. Abel became a keeper of flocks, and Cain a tiller of the soil. In the course of time Cain brought an offering to the Lord God from the fruit of the soil, while Abel for his part brought one of the best firstlings of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not. Cain greatly resented this and was crestfallen. Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out in the field." When they were in the field Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Genesis 1:27, 2:18, 21-22, 4:1-5; 8

Reflection

The story of Eve has many elements to consider. It is a story of a woman birthing two sons and how, because of jealousy, one brother kills the other. I

wonder how Eve and Adam dealt with their son Cain after they learn that Cain has killed his brother. Their shared sorrow must have consumed a lot of time and energy. Now consider how Mary might have spent time reflecting on this story and what she learned from it. As Mary moves toward her own role as a mother I wonder if she remembered how her mother raised her. We have heard the story of how Mary as a young child was taken to



the temple to be raised there. I wonder how that was for Mary. As we look at our own life we might look at our role of how we learned how to develop our mothering qualities. How have we lived out our role as mother, whether that be physical or spiritual mothering? In what ways have we brought something of value to birth whether that be a physical birth, a new ministry, a new aspect of a present ministry or even a new relationship?

Reflection Questions

- What are your thoughts and feelings as you reflect on the story of Eve?
- How might Eve have dealt with the death of her son Abel?
- How did Eve relate to her son Cain after he killed his brother?
- What were your parents' concerns as you grew up?
- Did you learn some skills of motherhood from your mother or grandmother?

Contemplative Silence

Sharing

If you are praying with a group, please take a few moments to share your reflections with one another.

Intercessions

Please respond: *Strengthen us, loving God.*

- Loving Creator, help all mothers to be compassionate with their children as they witness behaviors that go against what they would want for their children, we pray.
- Merciful and gracious God, give patience and courage to parents as they deal with the growing pains of their offspring, we pray.
- Thank you, God, for gifting us with the parents and models of motherhood that have influenced our lives in a positive way, we pray.
- For our Presentation People in Canada and the West Indies, we pray.
- For your intentions, we pray.

Closing Prayer

May God give us wisdom, understanding and courage as we deal with the persons in our care. May we trust that we will be guided by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hagar, Trafficked Woman Child

Hagar, the Egyptian slave of Sarah, was given to Abraham's embrace, since Sarah could not bear a child. This action caused tensions between the two women causing Hagar to run away for her own safety.

Opening Song

Reading

Abram's wife Sarai had borne him no children. She had, however, an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar. Sarai said to Abram. "The Lord has kept me from bearing children. Have intercourse, then with my maid: perhaps I shall have sons through her." Abram heeded Sarai's request. Thus, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, his wife Sarai took her maid, Hagar the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his concubine. He had intercourse with her, and she became pregnant. When she became aware of her pregnancy she looked on her mistress with disdain. So Sarai said to Abram: "You are responsible for this outrage against me. I myself gave my maid to your embrace; but ever since she became aware of her pregnancy, she has been looking on me with disdain. May the Lord decide between you and me!" Abram told Sarai: "Your maid is in your power. Do to her whatever you please." Sarai then abused her so much that Hagar ran away from her.

Genesis 16:1-6

Reflection

I am not sure how Mary or Nano would have reacted to this story but I can see a number of issues that might give us things to ponder. First, Sarai blames Abram for the reaction of Hagar toward Sarai once she is pregnant. It was Sarai's idea that Abram have intercourse with Hagar. However, it was also Hagar's reaction toward Sarai that made it uncomfortable for Sarai. It is sad to see the treatment Sarai gave to Hagar and we might be surprised to further read how God's messenger tells Hagar, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her abusive treatment." God does give Hagar a promise of many descendants. Sometimes we don't always see the total plan that God has in mind for us.

Reflection Questions

- Have you ever experienced being mistreated as Hagar was for things beyond your control?
- How did you react and what lessons might God have invited you to learn through this experience?
- Have you considered inviting the Holy Spirit to guide you in responding to events too difficult to handle?

Contemplative Silence

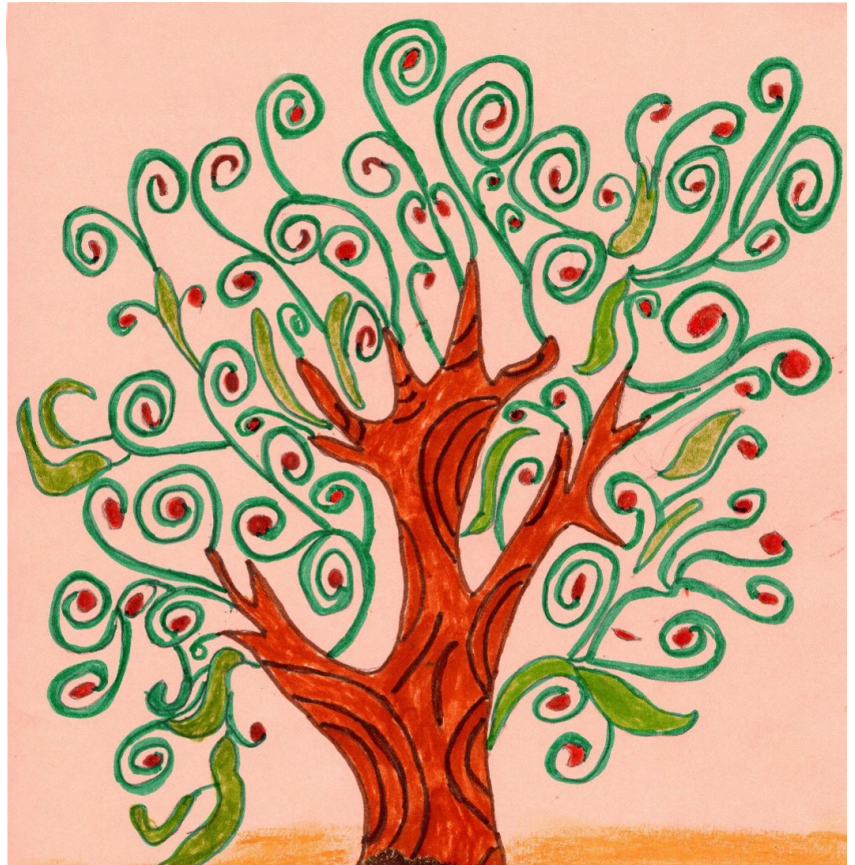
Sharing

If you are praying with a group, please take a few moments to share your reflections with one another.

Intercessions

Please respond: Give us a compassionate heart.

- For the grace to respond with nonviolence when an injustice is happening in your life, we pray.
- For God's healing touch to be felt by those who have experienced injustice in their life, we pray.
- For the strength to speak boldly and truthfully to those who continue to harm others through their injustice, we pray.
- For the grace to seek God's help in making difficult decisions that may cause us tension-filled moments, we pray.
- For our Presentation People in New Zealand and Latin America, we pray.
- For your intentions, we pray.



Closing Prayer

Loving God, I have many thoughts and feelings in praying through this scripture story. Help me to prayerfully consider the whole of situations in which I find myself.

There may be times when I react

rather than respond to events in my life. I pray that I will be open to your guidance when I am filled with many conflicting feelings and responses. I want to make the best decisions and with your help and guidance I can do that. Amen!

Shiphrah and Puah, The Midwives

Shiphrah and Puah were two midwives who prevented a genocide of children by the Egyptians.

Opening Song

Reading

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, "When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live." The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?" The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive." So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

Exodus 1:15-21



Reflection

The story of the midwives in Exodus is placed just before the story of baby Moses being rescued by his sister Miriam. The action of the midwives is a strong example of courageous women who stood up to the evil king and spoke truth to power and God protected and blessed them. Read again the story from Exodus and choose one or more questions to reflect on and share with your group.

Reflection Questions

- What did you notice initially as you heard/read the story?
- Through which lenses are you observing and making sense of what you read?
- What touched you and how?
- What parallels can you see from your own life story?
- What parallels can you see to today's challenges of equity and social justice?

Contemplative Silence

Sharing

If you are praying with a group, please take a few moments to share your reflections with one another.

Intercessions

Please respond: *God have mercy on our world!*

- For a world where the weak are protected, and none go hungry or poor, we pray.
- For a world where the riches of creation are shared, and everyone can enjoy them, we pray.
- For a world where different races and cultures live in harmony and mutual respect; we pray.
- For a world where peace is built with justice, and justice is guided by love, we pray.
- For our Presentation People in the United States of America, we pray.
- Gift us with inspiration and courage to build a more just and peaceful world, we pray.

Closing Prayer

O God, you have given all peoples one common origin. It is your plan that we be gathered together as one family in yourself. Fill the hearts of all of us with the fire of your love and with the desire to ensure justice for all.

By sharing the good things you give us, may we secure an equality for all our brothers and sisters throughout the world. May there be an end to division, strife and war. May there be a dawning of a new society built on love and peace.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Miriam, Baby Moses' Protector

Miriam saved her brother Moses' life when she caused the Pharaoh's daughter to notice baby Moses floating in a basket on the river. She became a prophetess who danced after Moses led the people out of Egypt.

Opening Song

Reading

Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Exodus 2: 1-10

Reflection

While the sister of Moses goes unnamed in Exodus 2, tradition suggests that she was Miriam who later became a prophetess. I imagine Moses' sister must have been several years older than him because she watched out for her baby brother and communicated successfully with Pharaoh's daughter about the baby's needs. As an adult, Miriam praised God with a tambourine and danced after her brother Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea and led the people to safety from Pharaoh's army (Exodus 15: 20-21). Surely part of Miriam's joy was remembering her role in his narrow escape from death.

As a young girl, Mary likely learned about caring for babies. Perhaps she had a baby cousin or neighbor she doted over, emulating the compassion her mother Anne taught her. Perhaps she knew the story of Miriam whose concern for her baby brother saved the life of a leader who rescued God's people from Pharaoh's army. Despite the low regard for women at that time in history, the story of Moses' sister would have taught Mary that one person, even a girl like herself, could impact history through a simple caring action.

Reflection Questions

- In what ways do your actions and your presence convey compassion and support for the vulnerable people in your family or community, just as Miriam watched out for her baby brother?
- Who else is God inviting you to pray for or reach out to in their time of need?
- What one small kindness will you do today for someone else?

Contemplative Silence

Sharing

If you are praying with a group, please take a few moments to share your reflections with one another.

Intercessions

Please respond: *God of mercy, hear our prayer.*

- For children who live in unsafe conditions or suffer from hunger and disease, we pray.
- For children separated from their parents due to violence or tragedy, we pray.
- For parents, childcare providers, and teachers to respond to children's needs with love, we pray.
- For government leaders to make wise decisions about policies and budget allocations to protect and serve children's needs, we pray.
- For Presentation People around the world to be courageous in their acts of kindness, especially those in India and Pakistan, we pray.



Closing Prayer

O God, you teach us to care for our brothers and sisters in need through the example of Miriam. Open our eyes to the sisters and brothers in our homes and our neighborhoods for whom we can be a compassionate presence. Call us to prayer and action for the vulnerable people in our midst. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Ruth, Stranger in a Strange Land

Two widows Naomi and Ruth, two countries, Israel and Moab, are bonded, and lasting repercussions ring throughout history.

Opening Song

Reading

Because of crop failure and famine in Israel, the widowed Naomi fled to the land of Moab with her two sons. They both married Moabite women but later died, leaving Naomi with two young widows. Though both loved Naomi, Orpah chose to stay with her family in Moab when Naomi began preparations to return to Bethlehem in Israel. Ruth, the beloved, however, chose differently and famously declared:

Wherever you go, I will go, wherever you live, I will live.

Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God.

Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried beside you.

The two women returned to Israel where Ruth found herself gleaning in the fields of Boaz. He was an honest and gracious man of Israel who took Ruth to himself. After marrying, Ruth delivered a son, Obed, who became the father of Jesse, the father of David, and relative of Joseph the husband of Mary. Because of Mary's YES at the time of the Annunciation, history was radically changed.

Ruth 1-4

Reflection

"In the days of the beloved Ruth You renewed Israel by a woman's hand. In faithful caring Ruth left her homeland and journeyed with the fair Naomi. Summoned by love she set aside all that defined her and came into a new land. Summoned by love she left her house of origin and became a house of origin in Bethlehem. Summoned by love she cast her vow from that moment in time into all eternity."

Miryam of Nazareth, Ann Johnson

Reflection Questions

- What lessons can I learn from Ruth, foremother of Mary, echoing through the centuries?
- As Ruth discovered the power within herself to move "faith into action," how might I continue to do this today?
- What societal changes do I see are needed in our world of 2021?

Contemplative Silence

Sharing

If you are praying with a group, please take a few moments to share your reflections with one another.

Intercessions

Please respond: God of mercy, hear our prayer.

- For all people in our global family facing hunger and oppression today as did the people of Israel, we pray.
- For women throughout the world, that they may know the strength, the faithfulness and love exhibited by Ruth as she followed her star, we pray.
- For acceptance of all peoples as they travel across borders on land and water seeking freedom and peace, we pray.
- For our Presentation People in England, Ireland, Slovakia and the Holy Lands, we pray.

Closing Prayer

We stand where they once stood,
Listening ... hearing in our own world,
New-born this day
Life's insistent cry, the Spirit's voice.
Let us rise up and follow,
For though the cross hang in our stars
Resurrection shouts in the sunrise,
And the tree of a hundred rings, deep-
thrusting
Out of warm darkness lifts to the light
Branches vibrant with song.
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Listening ... hearing in our own world,
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CENTURY, 1873-1973, Raphael Considine PBVM

Hannah, Woman of Prayer

Hannah, although barren, was the preferred wife of Elkanah. Peninnah, his other wife had children. Peninnah would constantly torment Hannah causing her to weep and refuse to eat.

Opening Song

Reading

Hannah rose after one such meal at Shiloh, and presented herself before the Lord; at the time Eli the priest was sitting on a chair near the doorpost of the Lord's temple. In her bitterness she prayed to the Lord, weeping freely, and made this vow: "O Lord of hosts, if you look with pity on the hardship of your servant, if you remember me and do not forget me, if you give your handmaid a male child, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life. No razor shall ever touch his head." As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli watched her mouth, for Hannah was praying silently; though her lips were moving, her voice could not be heard. Eli, thinking she was drunk, said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Sober up from your wine!" "No, my lord!" Hannah answered. "I am an unhappy woman. I have had neither wine nor liquor; I was only pouring out my heart to the Lord. Do not think your servant a worthless woman; my prayer has been prompted by my deep sorrow and misery." Eli said, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have requested." She replied, "Let your servant find favor in your eyes," and left. She went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and no longer appeared downhearted. She conceived and, at the end of her pregnancy, bore a son whom she named Samuel. "Because I asked the Lord for him."

1 Samuel 1:9-18

Reflection

In ancient Israel children, and especially sons, were regarded as gifts of God, often as the reward for a righteous life. A woman who could not bear children seemed marked with divine disapproval and might well be divorced or pushed aside in disdain by a rival wife. It is striking that so many important mothers in early Hebrew history are described as originally barren. In each case, however, God intervened miraculously to give a son who was destined to preserve or aid his people.

Reader's Digest *Who's Who in The Bible*, designed and edited by Gardner Associates, p.382



Reflection Questions

- Eli misjudged Hannah and accused her of making a drunken show of herself. Hannah explained that she was only pouring out her troubles to the Lord. Has there been a time in your life when you have misjudged someone and only later found out the truth about that person?
- Our God is a God of surprises. When was a time when God surprised you?

Contemplative Silence

Sharing

If you are praying with a group, please take a few moments to share your reflections with one another.

Intercessions

Please respond: God hear us, hear our prayer.

- May we be seekers of truth and not misjudge others. We pray.
- May we learn from Hannah that God always knows the answers to our prayers. We pray.
- For our Presentation People in Australia and Papua New Guinea, we pray.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray *Hannah's Magnificat*.

My heart exults in the Lord, my horn is exalted by my God.
I have swallowed up my enemies; I rejoice in your victory.
There is no Holy One like the Lord; there is no rock like our God.
Speak boastfully no longer, do not let arrogance issue from your mouths.
For an all-knowing God is the Lord, a God who weighs actions.
The bows of the mighty are broken, while the tottering gird on strength.
The well-fed hire themselves out for bread, while the hungry no longer have to toil.
The barren wife bears seven sons, while the mother of many languishes.
The Lord puts to death and gives life, casts down to Sheol and brings up again.
The Lord makes poor and makes rich, humbles, and also exalts.
He raises the needy from the dust; from the ash heap lifts up the poor,
To seat them with nobles and make a glorious throne their heritage.
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he has set the world upon them.
He guards the footsteps of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall perish in the darkness;
for not by strength does one prevail.
The Lord's foes shall be shattered; the Most High in heaven thunders; the Lord judges the
ends of the earth.
May he give strength to his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed!

Samuel 2: 1-10

Abigail, Peacemaker

Nabal who had property in Carmel was harsh and bad-mannered. His wife, Abigail was intelligent and beautiful. When David was in Carmel, he asked for food for himself and his men. Nabal refused and David prepared for war.

Opening Song

Reading

Abigail, Nabal's wife, was informed of this by one of the servants, who said: "From the wilderness David sent messengers to greet our master, but he screamed at them. Yet these men were very good to us. We were not harmed, neither did we miss anything all the while we were living among them during our stay in the open country. Day and night they were a wall of protection for us, the whole time we were pasturing the sheep near them. Now, see what you can do, for you must realize that otherwise disaster is in store for our master and for his whole house. He is such a scoundrel that no one can talk to him."

Abigail quickly got together two hundred loaves, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of pressed raisins, and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. She then said to her servants, "Go on ahead; I will follow you." But to her husband Nabal she said nothing. As soon as Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey and, falling down, bowed low to the ground before David in homage. As she fell at his feet she said: "My lord, let the blame be mine. Please let your maidservant speak to you; listen to the words of your maidservant. My lord, do not pay any attention to that scoundrel Nabal, for he is just like his name. His name means fool, and he acts the fool. I, your maidservant, did not see the young men whom my lord sent. Now, therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as you live, the Lord has kept you from shedding blood and from avenging yourself by your own hand. May your enemies and those who seek to harm my lord become as Nabal! Accept this gift, then, which your maidservant has brought for my lord, and let it be given to the young men who follow my lord.

David said to Abigail: "Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet me today."

1 Samuel 25:14-19,23-27,32

Reflection

There is a story about an ancient Greek legislator who stood up to address a meeting of the city fathers. The assembly was debating the passing of a resolution concerned with punishing a vassal city-state that had failed to pay tribute. The issue was whether they should send the army out and kill them all. When our man took the floor, he said: "For thousands of years people have been trying to find ways of preventing crime. What do they do? They keep increasing the severity of the punishment on the supposition that this will deter the criminal. But it doesn't work. You've got to find out what is causing the

criminal to act. One thing I know, as long as people are poor, hungry, and oppressed, they will continue to do what they feel they have to do to stay alive, and all your threatened punishments are not going to deter them.”

Radical Optimism, by Beatrice Bruteau, page 74

Reflection Questions

- What are the peaceful options to war?
- When have you noticed that you or someone else has been a peacemaker?

Contemplative Silence

Sharing

If you are praying with a group, please take a few moments to share your reflections with one another.

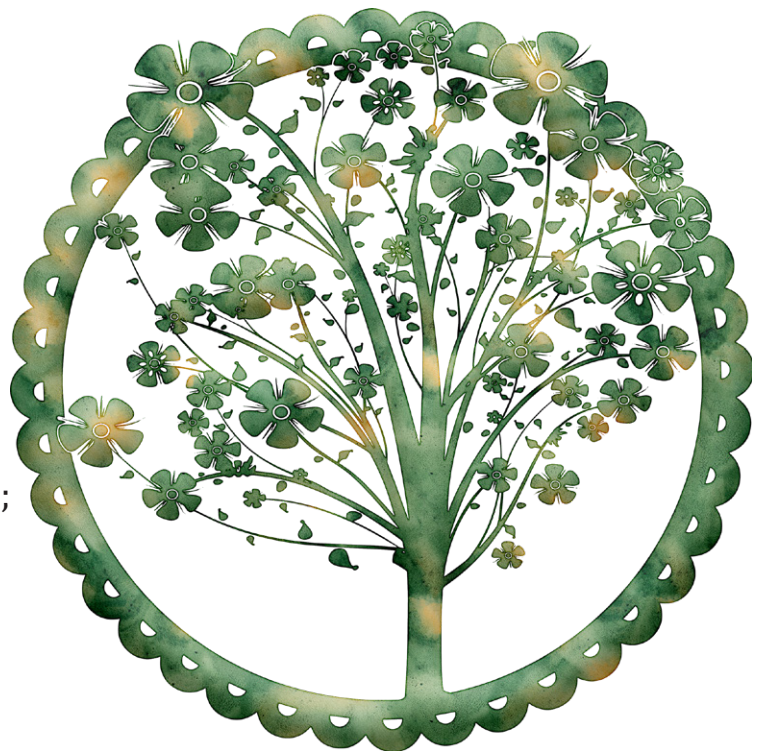
Intercessions

Please respond: *God, hear us, hear our prayer.*

- As Nano’s daughters, may all our prayers, words and works give praise to you, O God, until no one, anywhere, is poor, hungry, oppressed or alone, and peace takes root in all our lands. We pray.
- Filled with passion for peace and non-violence throughout our world, we pray that we may always labor to build a world filled with hope, reconciliation, and healing. We pray.
- We remember today our Presentation People in the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia. We pray.

Closing Prayer - Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness joy.
O divine master grant that I may
not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it’s in giving that we receive,
and it’s in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it’s in dying that we are born ...
to eternal life.
Amen.



Esther, Speaker of Truth to Power

In the 6th century BC, the Jews were an oppressed people scattered in an early diaspora and living at the whim of a King. At peril of her own life, Queen Esther advocated for her people.

Opening Song

Reading

The Book of Esther truly reads like a story book and indeed, has been said to contain three “novellas!” The main characters are Mordechai, a high-ranking Jew in the court of the Persian King Assuerus and guardian of a beautiful Jewess later named Esther; Haman also a court official or vizier, the king himself, and the banished queen Vasthi.



After King Assuerus banished Queen Vasthi he commanded Haman to procure beautiful maidens in order to form a harem, from which he would choose a new queen. Unaware that Esther was a Jewess he chose her and crowned her queen. Meanwhile Mordechai learned of a plot to kill the king, informed him, and rose in favor. Haman was furious at Mordechai and plotted to have the king kill all the Jews in the kingdom, stretching from India to Ethiopia. Mordechai learns of this, contacts all the Jews to enter into three days of prayer and fasting. He convinces Esther to do the

same for three days, then appear before the king even though unsummoned by him, and beg for the life of her people. This act alone could lead to her own death, but she was ready to advocate for the life of her people after prayer and fasting.

The king is swayed by her pleading and changes his orders, saving the entire Jewish people. The king has the wicked Haman killed and raises Mordechai to a higher place in his court. Queen Esther is still in favor!

Book of Esther 1-10

Reflection

Esther, at first obedient and compliant, joined the harem and later assumed the crown of queen. But learning that all her people would be killed in a genocide (such as we see happening still today), she turned to fasting and prayer before appearing before the king and facing the possibility of her own death. While speaking “truth to power” she saved the entire people of Israel from death.

Reflection Questions

- Before all else we saw in Queen Esther, as did Mary in the temple, the power of prayer. Does this call for a change in my prayer life?
- Looking at the signs of the times in our day, how do I “speak truth to power” in 2021?
- What can we do to combat the evils of systemic racism, of gun violence, of blatant injustice?

Contemplative Silence

Sharing

If you are praying with a group, please take a few moments to share your reflections with one another.

Intercessions

Please respond: *God of mercy, hear our prayer.*

- For all who are threatened unjustly from whatever cause, we pray.
- For all those people in power who close their minds and hearts to the truth, we pray.
- For the grace to listen and truly hear those in our midst who are moving with the Spirit, we pray.
- For all members of the Nagle and Rice family throughout the world, we pray.

Closing Prayer

We call on the holy women who went before us,
Channels of your word in testaments old and new,
To intercede for us so that we might be given the grace
To become what they have been for the honor and glory of God. Amen

A Litany of Women for the Church, Joan Chittister OSB

Closing

Happy Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary!

Reflection

Today we celebrate the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in communion with thousands of Presentation People and Friends of Nano around the world. This feast day story is not found in the Bible, but it helps us imagine the ways Mary prepared to respond to God's call. Through the prayers of this novena, we celebrated some women in the Hebrew scriptures whose life stories likely informed Mary's faith and helped her offer a courageous "Yes!" to God's call. Even as we celebrate Mary's call to bring Christ to birth, we are mindful of the needs of all of creation for restoration to wholeness: people, living creatures, Earth, the entire natural universe. The injustices and sufferings on our planet can seem overwhelming. We need each other to bolster our sense of hope. We need to celebrate the stories of heroes like Nano Nagle & Presentation People who have gone before us. These inspiring people boost our resilience in our efforts to share hospitality and persevere in justice work to restore right relationships in our world.

We are mindful that some Presentation People have plans to attend Presentation Day Mass where you will renew your vows and some others may not have the opportunity to attend liturgies. For those who do not have a ritual to celebrate Presentation Day we offer this option.

Opening Song

Choose a song that honors Mary or celebrates a theme of being called by God.

Readings

The angel went to (Mary) and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." In a loud voice (Elizabeth) exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!"

Luke 1:28, 42

Reflection (included above)

Reflection Questions

- Who are the Presentation People whose lives of faith and service inspire you?
- In what ways is God calling you to deepen your commitment to Christ and say "Yes!" again today?

Contemplative silence

Sharing

Renewal of Commitments

Leader: Presentation People gathered today to celebrate the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, do you desire to carry on the mission of Nano Nagle and the legacy of prayer & service of the thousands of Presentation People who have gone before us?

All: Yes, we do!

Leader: I invite you to renew your vows and/or commitments.

All: (As appropriate to your vocation call, prayerfully renew your vows or commitments or promises before God and your community. If you have not professed vows or promises, consider making a commitment to devote time to prayer or a particular act of service in the coming year.)

Celebration of Commitments

Leader: I invite you to show a sign of communal blessing of these commitments.

(Give instructions for an appropriate gesture depending on the size of your group and appropriate covid safety precautions such as: make a sign of the cross on others' hands, bow, say "namaste", wave & smile, or applaud.)

Closing Prayer

Faithful God, you create us in your image and draw us ever closer to you through our vows, promises, and commitments. Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our foundress Venerable Nano Nagle, help us grow in communion with all Presentation People and Friends of Nano around the world as we courageously respond together to the needs of our times. Bless the next generations of Presentation People and Friends of Nano with inspiration to rejoice in your call to say "Yes!" as Mary and Nano did. Be with us in our joy today as we celebrate our connections with the global Presentation family on this Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Amen.



Painting above: Cosmic Communion, Dawn of Creation Bursing Forth, Mary Jaeger PBVM