

SUNDAY

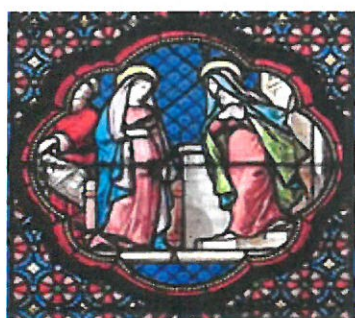
PLUS



Women of faith

A Year of the Word

Mary and Elizabeth



by Kasia Greenwood

In the Bible, as well as in history, politics and industry, the narrative is often driven by men, so today's reading about Mary and Elizabeth has particular importance as we reflect on the theme "Women of Faith".

At the time of the cousins' meeting, both women were pregnant, leading

us to immediately consider the role of woman as mother. Mary's position as Jesus' mother is highly significant. She is not a figure who is swept under the carpet and only mentioned briefly in the Bible. Her virtuous nature, innate goodness and undoubted love for Jesus paint a picture of the most nourishing and loving mother figure, and indeed a mother to us all.

However, Mary and Elizabeth's roles are not defined purely as mothers. After all, both of their pregnancies are brought about due to their great faith in God. Not only that, but both women are to raise significant figures for the whole of Christianity: St John the Baptist and, of course, Jesus himself. In the reading, Elizabeth immediately recognises the enormous import of Mary's baby and the blessing

God has bestowed upon her. In response, Mary praises God's strength and mercy, and says that her "soul magnifies the Lord". What incredible faith we witness in these women!

The contribution of women to the Church continues, with thousands of missionary sisters running schools and hospitals overseas, mothers raising their children in faith, and indeed women in our own parishes taking on numerous responsibilities to keep everything running. We follow the examples of Mary and Elizabeth as we dedicate ourselves to God and the family of the Church, showing ourselves to also be "Women of Faith".

Kasia Greenwood is the mother of a growing family and also works in education.

Image: Zvonimir Atletic / Shutterstock.com

Mary, my mother, brave in situations where I could not have coped; loving beyond anything I can imagine; understanding of people and situations which I would avoid altogether. Mary, be part of my life and my love. Help me to follow Jesus. Let me love you more and more with each passing day. ☪ Amen.

Women of tenderness

by Gerlinde Symons

In our Gospel reading today we hear how Mary, having consented to God's plan for her, hurries to help her elderly cousin Elizabeth, who is soon to give birth to a son. Both women, by their faith in God's promise to them, have been touched by the power of the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth recognises Mary's special role, and calls

her blessed. Mary's response is a prayer of thanksgiving to God (the Magnificat) for having chosen her to be the mother of Jesus. She is a role model for us all – of humility, obedience and surrender to the will of God.

On this feast day of the Assumption, when Mary was lifted up to heaven, body and soul, to be with her son Jesus, we give thanks for her faithfulness. May we live in hope that, like Mary, we too will be raised up on the last day – body and soul – to everlasting life.

Gerlinde Symons is a Catholic lay prison chaplain at two UK prisons.

Woman of courage

by Catherine Pepinster

If the Gospels are a story of faith, then much of that story is bound up with women. It is women who stay loyal to Jesus when his disciples fall asleep, run away and even deny him at his time of trial. Women are persistent, frequently calling on Jesus to help them, asking for signs of his power and love. They stand

at the foot of the cross at his end, and are first to see him on Easter morning. But above all, it is Mary who is the exemplar of faith and of courage. She is willing to carry him, to raise him and to love him. At Cana, she shows that same persistence as other women, when she persuades him to turn water into wine at the wedding feast. The wine is overflowing, just as Mary's love is overflowing. Could there have been Jesus without Mary?

Catherine Pepinster is a former editor of *The Tablet* and the author of *The Keys and the Kingdom – the British and the papacy from John Paul II to Francis*, published by T&T Clark.

"Functionality is not woman's purpose: it is true that a woman must do things and does things — as we all do. However, woman's purpose is to create harmony, and without woman there is no harmony in the world."

Pope Francis

Six Women from the Bible
Denis McBride



Two DVDs

10% off DVD for Sunday Plus readers!

Go online www.rpbbooks.co.uk
or call us 01420 88222
with discount code Plus

Fr Denis McBride tells the stories of six biblical women who have a message for us today

Today: Apocalypse 11:19; 12:1-6. 10
1 Corinthians 15:20-26
Luke 1:39-56

Monday: Ezekiel 24:15-24
Matthew 19:16-22

Tuesday: Ezekiel 28:1-10
Matthew 19:23-30

Wednesday: Ezekiel 34:1-11
Matthew 20:1-16

Thursday: Ezekiel 36:23-28
Matthew 22:1-14

Friday: Ezekiel 37:1-14
Matthew 22:34-40

Saturday: Ezekiel 43:1-7
Matthew 23:1-12

Next Sunday: Isaiah 22:19-23
Romans 11:33-36
Matthew 16:13-20

redemptorist

Sunday Plus, Edited by Denis McBride C.Ss.R. and Sr Janet Fearn FMDM. Copyright © Redemptorist Publications, Chawton, Hampshire GU14 2HD. A registered charity limited by guarantee. Registered in England 02961724. www.rpbbooks.co.uk. Printed on FSC approved paper.

www.facebook.com/sundayplus