

## 1. A Childless Wife's Anguish - Hannah

### *Questions to begin*

- How old were you when you started school?
- What's the most competitive situation you've ever been in? Did you like it?

### *The Reading: 1 Samuel 1:1 – 2:11, 18-21*

#### *For This Child I Prayed*

1 There was a certain man of Ramathaim.... whose name was Elkanah.... <sup>2</sup>He had two wives; the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

<sup>3</sup> Now this man used to go up year by year from his town to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh.... <sup>4</sup> On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters; <sup>5</sup> but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>6</sup> Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. <sup>7</sup> So it went on year after year; as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. <sup>8</sup> Her husband Elkanah said to her, 'Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?'

<sup>9</sup> After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. <sup>10</sup> She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. <sup>11</sup> She made this vow: 'O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.'

<sup>12</sup> As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. <sup>13</sup> Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. <sup>14</sup> So Eli said to her, 'How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.' <sup>15</sup> But Hannah answered, 'No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. <sup>16</sup> Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.' <sup>17</sup> Then Eli answered, 'Go in

peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.’<sup>18</sup> And she said, ‘Let your servant find favour in your sight.’ Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.

19 They rose early in the morning and worshipped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her.<sup>20</sup> In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, ‘I have asked him of the LORD.’

21 The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow.<sup>22</sup> But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, ‘As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the LORD, and remain there for ever....’<sup>23</sup> Her husband Elkanah said to her, ‘Do what seems best to you....’

<sup>24</sup>When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young.<sup>25</sup> Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli.<sup>26</sup> And she said, ‘Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD.<sup>27</sup> For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him.<sup>28</sup> Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD.’ She left him there for the LORD.

### *Hannah's Prayer*

<sup>2</sup>Hannah prayed and said,  
‘My heart exults in the LORD;  
my strength is exalted in my God....

<sup>3</sup>‘There is no Holy One like the Lord,  
no one besides you...

<sup>4</sup>The bows of the mighty are broken,  
but the feeble gird on strength....

<sup>5</sup>The barren has borne seven,  
but she who has many children is forlorn.

<sup>6</sup>The Lord kills and brings to life;  
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

<sup>7</sup>The Lord makes poor and makes rich;  
he brings low, he also exalts.

<sup>8</sup>He raises up the poor from the dust;  
he lifts the needy from the ash heap,

to make them sit with princes  
and inherit a seat of honour....

<sup>10</sup>The Lord! His adversaries shall be shattered;  
the Most High will thunder in heaven.

The Lord will judge the ends of the earth;  
he will give strength to his king,  
and exalt the power of his anointed.’

11 Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, while the boy remained to minister to the LORD, in the presence of the priest Eli....

### ***The Child Samuel at Shiloh***

18 Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. <sup>19</sup>His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. <sup>20</sup>Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, ‘May the LORD repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD’; and then they would return to their home.

21 And the LORD took note of Hannah; she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD.

### ***First Impression***

Was there anything that surprised, impressed, delighted or challenged you in this reading?

### ***Questions for Reflection***

- Why does Elkanah ask Hannah why she’s weeping (1:8)?
- Is Hannah’s prayer in 1:11 selfish? In what ways can prayer be selfish and in what ways can it be unselfish?
- Jesus will later teach us to pray: “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” In what ways is Hannah’s prayer a request that God’s name be hallowed, that his kingdom come, that his will be done?
- At first Hannah does not tell Eli why she is distressed (1:15-16; compare 1:26-28). What might be the reason for her refraining from doing so?
- At the end of the first episode, Hannah eats and drinks and no longer seems

weighed down with sorrow (1:18). Why?

- Based on the text, how would you evaluate the relationship between Elkanah and Hannah?
- Think of a person of prayer you have known. How did she/he become a praying person? What could you learn from this person about growing in prayer?
- What obstacles prevent people from participating in life fully today (e.g. physical disabilities, mental and emotional diseases, declining health in old age, and inadequate material resources)? What can be done, in the Church and in society, to help people overcome these obstacles?
- Think of a situation in which you asked God to do something important for you or someone else. How did you pray? What happened? How did you experience God in response to your prayer? How has this affected your relationship with God? What did you learn that you could apply to your life now?

### *Closing Prayer*

Pray Psalm 13 as an appeal to God for any needs of your own or of others who may have come to mind as you were reading about Hannah. Think of the “enemy” in the psalm as your own sinful tendencies and as the forces that stand in the way of your meeting these needs.

### *Psalm 13 Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies*

- <sup>1</sup> How long, O LORD? Will you forget me for ever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?
- <sup>2</sup> How long must I bear pain in my soul,  
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?  
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
- <sup>3</sup> Consider and answer me, O LORD my God!  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
- <sup>4</sup> and my enemy will say, ‘I have prevailed’;  
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.
- <sup>5</sup> But I trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
- <sup>6</sup> I will sing to the LORD,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Glory be.....