

Tough Mothers
August 8, 2021

HAGAR
MOTHER OF MANY
(TOO MANY TO COUNT)

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Preaching

First Reading ~ *Genesis 16:1-15*

Now Sarai and Abram were childless. However, Sarai had an Egyptian handmaiden named Hagar. Sarai said to Abram, "Since YHWH has made me childless, go to my handmaiden Hagar. Perhaps I will get children through her. Abram agreed to Sarai's suggestion, and so Sarai gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. Sarai and Abram had been living in the land of Canaan for ten years by this time. Abram slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant.

Once Hagar became pregnant, she looked with disdain on Sarai. So Sarai said to Abram, "This wrong being done to me is your fault! It was I who put Hagar into your arms, but now that she has conceived, you allow me to count for nothing in her eyes! Let YHWH judge between you and me!" Abram told Sarai, "She is your servant, treat her as you will." So Sarai treated Hagar so badly that she ran away.

The Angel of YHWH found Hagar by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the road to Shur. The angel asked, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" Hagar replied, "I am running away from Sarai." The angel said to her, "Go back to Sarai and submit to her. I will make your descendants too numerous to count." The angel continued: "You are now pregnant and you will bear a child. You will name it 'Ishmael' – 'God Hears' – for God has heard you in your sorrow. He will be like a wild donkey, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him, living in strife, even with his own siblings."

Recognizing God as the one who spoke to her, Hagar said to YHWH, "You are El-roi, the God Who Sees!" adding, "Have I actually gone on seeing- and living – after God has seen me?" Therefore the spring was called Beer-lahai-roi, "Well of the Living One Who Sees Me"; it is between Kadesh and Bered. Hagar bore Abram a child, and Abram named it Ishmael.

Second Reading ~ *adapted from Father Richard Rohr in "A Spring Within Us"*

All healthy religion shows you what to do with your pain, with the absurd, the tragic, the nonsensical, the unjust and the undeserved—all of which eventually come into every lifetime. If only we could see these "wounds" as *the way through*, as Jesus did, then they would become sacred wounds rather than scars to deny, disguise, or project onto others. I am sorry to admit that I first see my wounds as an obstacle more than a gift. Healing is a long, long journey.