

Reflection for Saturday 19 December

Both the readings for this Saturday contain two miracle births. In the first reading from the 13th chapter of the Book of Judges the wife of a man called Manoah, who could not have children, was visited by an angel to be told she would be giving birth to a son. The angel told her how the boy was to be brought up as a nazirite: his hair was not to be cut and he was to abstain from alcohol. In the Gospel reading Zechariah the priest's wife Elizabeth also could not conceive and she was now passed child-bearing age. The angel of the Lord visited Zechariah whilst he was performing his priestly duties to tell him that his wife would give birth to a son. Again, there were to be conditions: the boy was to be called John and he too was to abstain from alcohol.

These two sons were to make a great difference to the life of the people of Israel. The name of the first boy was Samson. He was well known for his physical strength. At the time Israel was invaded by the Philistines and the leadership of Israel was ineffective in repelling the Philistines. Samson, who had God's spirit with him, managed to rescue the land from them. Samson, at his death, killed more Philistines than on other occasions when God gave him the strength to collapse the house in which was staying on top of the many Philistines inside, killing them all.

In the Gospel reading the son of Zechariah was John the Baptist. He stood at the end of the Old Testament as the prophet whom Jesus called Elijah, preparing the way of the New Testament by proclaiming and performing a baptism of repentance in preparation for the coming of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. John's message was profound because it made people change their lives, ready to welcome Jesus into them when he came.

God can perform miracles when he needs to do so. He can make it possible for us to change when we repent of our sins, so about turning to welcome the Christ child into our lives, allowing his message of peace, joy and love to take over from our sinful ways.

Let us ask God, that in spite of all the restrictions this Christmas, that his Son Jesus may make all the difference in our lives.

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