

# SUNDAY PLUS



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ADOREMUS

Give birth to hope

## God has shown favour

by Mary Bell

One could be forgiven for thinking of St Elizabeth as a type of early feminist. Not only was she, a mother, defying tradition in naming her son but also in

choosing a name which was not a family name, going quite against the usual custom. Of course, she was obeying God's command delivered to her husband by the angel Gabriel.

However, that name could not have been more appropriate. "John" means "God has shown favour" and indeed God had shown great favour to Elizabeth who had had to endure the stigma of childlessness all her married life. Here was a woman past child-bearing years, who had received the great gift of a son, the hope and desire of all good Jewish families. Zechariah, of course, knew this son was a divine gift and waived his right to name the boy after himself.

John was to become the forerunner of the messiah, the voice crying in the wilderness that the prophets had foretold, but nobody knew that yet. Everybody, however, realised he must be very special. Just as nowadays we try to make predictions about a child's future, so public opinion made its pronouncements about John: he was going to do something wonderful.

And John fulfilled all their hopes by foretelling the coming of Jesus, preaching repentance for sin and baptising people in the river Jordan. He even baptised Jesus himself, recognising that here was the hope of Israel, the hope of the world. God indeed showed him favour.

*Mary Bell is a grandmother and a retired teacher who continues to use her skills in the University of the Third Age.*

The birth of St John the Baptist scene, St George Church, Jerusalem, Israel. Renata Sedmakova / Shutterstock.com



## Children need hope

by Christine Clark

Sometimes, children can seem like mini-adults. Not always happy, carefree, cheerful or good sleepers, they can seem like an older person tired of life: anxious, fretful, lacking in confidence and wakeful.

What gives children their characteristics? We'd like to think our genes, excellent parenting skills and a good home produce the perfect child – but we know that this isn't so. We may need to turn things around and see that seemingly negative traits can lead to new situations and opportunities, where good might come out of the not-so-promising. The world would not only be very dull if it only contained perfect children: it also wouldn't be challenged or develop.

Whether our children are little angels or challenging characters, we

need to believe in them, allow them to be themselves and see where our encouragement and hope take them. As long as they can see that where they are and how they are is OK, they'll have the confidence to be as they are – or to develop, chrysalis-like, into something else. Either is fine.

*Christine Clark has recently retired from the editorial staff of Redemptorist Publications.*

**“In the family we learn how to love, to forgive, to be generous and open, not closed and selfish. We learn to move beyond our own needs, to encounter others and share our lives with them.**

Pope Francis

## Giving hope

by Dr Philip Alton

Children are a wonderful sign of hope: a promise of a future. Their joy and innocence, not marred by our pettiness and cynicism, speak of our eternal purpose. New life foreshadows eternal life.

Every life is precious for this hope: a contradiction against the world which so often fails to love. And every life – like every hope – should be protected and nurtured until it can affect the world with love. John, nurtured and strengthened in the Spirit, goes to prepare the way for Our Lord; helping people to seek forgiveness and redemption – to find again that joy, and be restored to innocence and to life.

If our children are to be hope for the future, then we must gift them with the hope of the present. If we nurture and strengthen our children (as parents, teachers, role models, or

otherwise) with love and teach them to love, then we gift the future with the hope of love.

*Dr Philip Alton is a medical doctor with a young family.*

**Lord, you brought hope into the lives of Zechariah and Elizabeth.**

**Your cousin John the Baptist proclaimed hope from the hardship of the wilderness. Be with families in their joys, sorrow and challenges in life. Give hope and joy to our hurting world. Amen.**

Today: Isaiah 49:1-6 Acts 13:22-26 Luke 1:57-66. 80	Monday: 2 Kings 17:5-8. 13-15. 18 Matthew 7:1-5	Tuesday: 2 Kings 19:9-11. 14-21. 31-36 Matthew 7:6. 12-14	Wednesday: 2 Kings 22:8-13; 23:1-3 Matthew 7:15-20	Thursday: 2 Kings 24:8-17 Matthew 7:21-29	Friday: Acts 12:1-11 2 Timothy 4:6-8. 17-18 Matthew 16:13-19	Saturday: Lamentations 2:2. 10-14. 18-19 Matthew 8:5-17	Next Sunday: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24 2 Corinthians 8:7. 9. 13-15 Mark 5:21-43
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