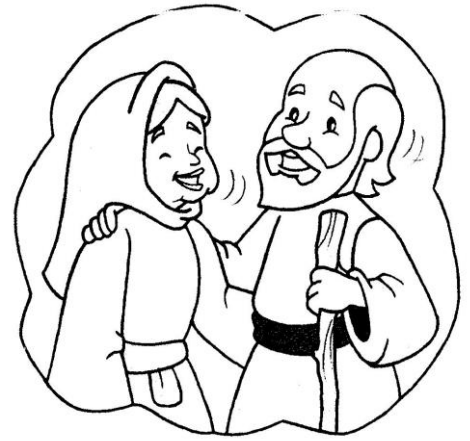


Women of Faith: The Spirit of Laughter

'Sarah shall be her name and I shall bless her.'

Lent 2 Year B Genesis 17.1-7,15-16

Put yourself in Sarai's shoes – 90 years old with an even older husband and childless. (Let's not worry about whether the ancient Hebrew world counted years like we do – they were OLD.) Abram would be pitied and poor Sarai would be disgraced in ancient times.



Then God pops in to promise them they will be the father and mother of many nations – the founding parents of a chosen race. They laughed. Wouldn't you? They were given new names: Abram (meaning exalted father) became Abraham (meaning 'father of a multitude'). Sarai (meaning 'my princess' – so limiting her dominion to one family) becomes Sarah (meaning 'princess' - simply and absolutely without restriction, the princess of a multitude). It's all in a name! Nine months later a baby is born – and they name him Isaac (which means 'someone laughs'). Wouldn't you laugh? The rest is history – a nation has begun. A nation which will beget twelve tribes and be the family in which Jesus is born.

This timeless story tells of deeper truths than infertility or ageing. It tells of God's love for the world; of God's power to bring life into barren lands; of God's desire to lead his people into a 'promised land' of justice, fruitfulness and peace.

This love knows no boundaries of age or infirmity, no limits of earthly restrictions or misfortunes. This Love longs to overflow through our lives and into the lives of others, so unfolding heaven on earth.

We may then pray with hopefulness for those who suffer childlessness, those who feel that age has limited them, those who despair of the future. We may also laugh with God at his prodigious love and expensive plan to save us from ourselves. Laughter is the natural out-bursting of joy at what seems an impossible dream coming to life.

*You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace
And the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy and the trees of the fields
shall clap, shall clap their hands.*