Columns
Spirituality
Social Justice



The prophetess Anna is depicted at left, holding a scroll, in this detail from the 15th-century painting "The Presentation in the Temple" by Alvaro Pirez. (Metropolitan Museum of Art)



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When we pray the rosary or any Marian prayer, we are, in one sense, praying with Mary, not just to her. Praying with her means we are also interceding with her. That said, what other women of the Bible could inspire our prayer for so many needs in our world? I would like to suggest praying with one or more of these women:

Old Testament

Rizpah (2 Samuel 3:7; 21:8-14)

Because of her actions, she can be a symbol of those parents whose children have been executed, kidnapped or disappeared.

- For families with a family member in prison.
- For those on death row, especially those unjustly condemned.
- For families impacted by violence.
- For all families who have a loved one who has been kidnapped or disappeared.

Add your own intentions here:

Ruth (Book of Ruth)

Her story was one of xenophobia, that is, fear of the foreigner. Foreign women/wives were to be feared as many often helped to make pagan practices popular in Israel. Her life impacted the history of Israel as she was the great-grandmother of King David. She was also a caregiver to Naomi. To help provide food, she was a gleaner. She picked up what was left during the harvesting.

- For immigrants and refugees.
- For those who work with and for immigrants and refugees.
- For just laws and policies dealing with immigrants and refugees.

- For all caregivers, especially women who make up some 53-68% of this population.
- For all agricultural workers, that they will be given a fair wage and safe working conditions.

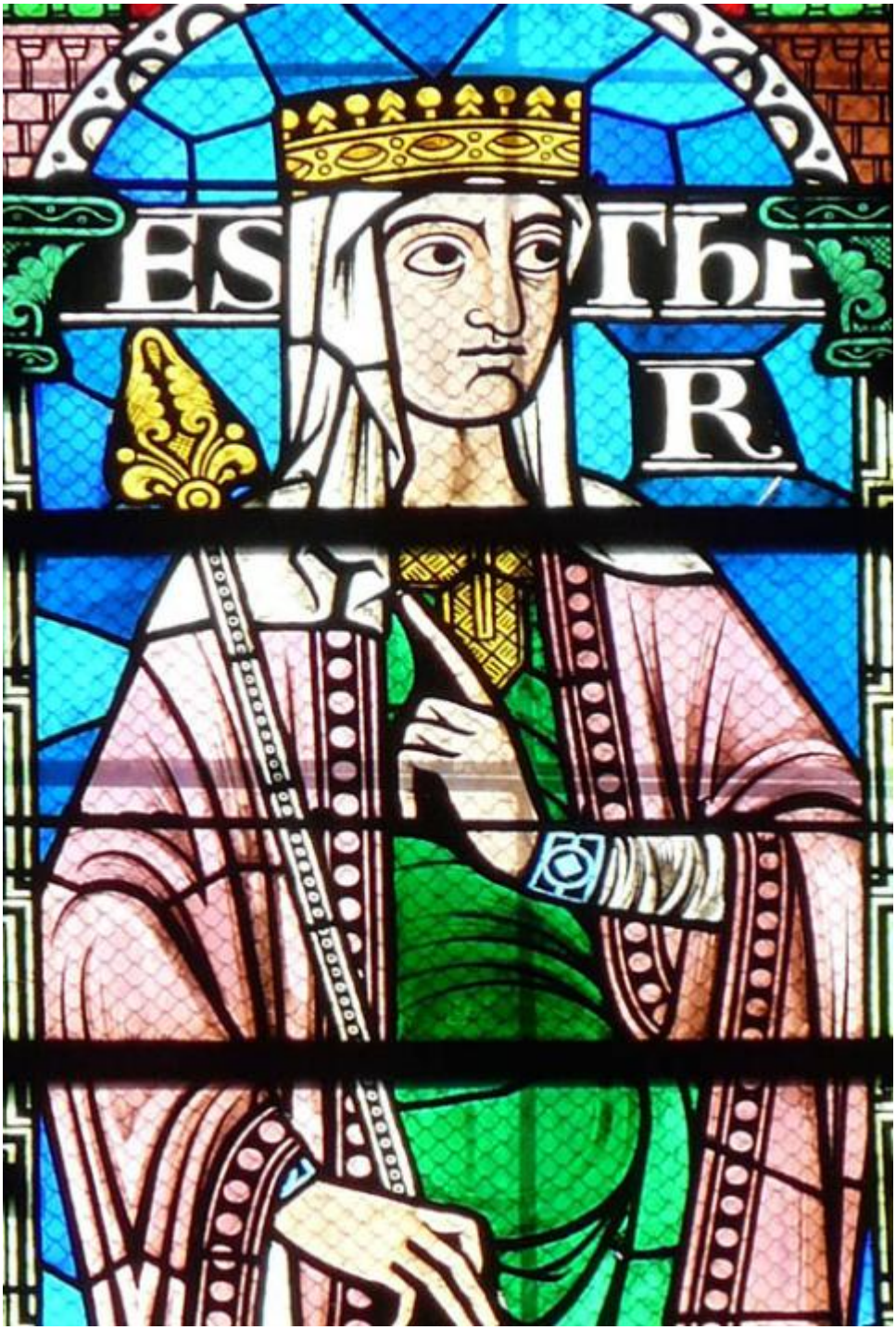
Add your own intentions here:

Lady Wisdom (Proverbs 4:1-9)

- For families dealing with family members who have lost their faith, or who are struggling with addiction.
- For parents needing the grace and wisdom to act compassionately with children who have come out as gay, transgender, or other alternative sexual identities.

Add your own intentions here:

Queen Esther (Book of Esther)



Queen Esther, depicted in stained glass (Wikimedia Commons/Père Igor)

For those speaking truth to power. Esther had lost everything: her parents, her family, and her country. However, she never lost her faith in God. She was intelligent as she knew how to orchestrate the confrontation between her husband, the king, Haman and herself. Yet she did not rely only on that. She prepared herself for her audience with the king with prayer and fasting, knowing she risked execution

if the king did not accept her when she entered his presence.

- For all government leaders, that they will be strengthened to make compassionate decisions and laws.
- For the grace of perseverance for those who work to change unjust laws.
- For all people who have risked everything and died in witness for their faith and people.
- For those who in conscience speak the truth to power, that they will be strengthened in their speaking and its consequences.

Add your own intentions here:

Judith (Book of Judith)

She was not the typical widow of the times. She was wealthy, yet she fasted and prayed. She was a woman of courage, speaking up to the men in the military as well as entering the enemy's camp to kill their leader. Which she did.

- For those preparing for marriage.
- For those who are divorced
- For those who are financially struggling in their marriage.
- For those who feel trapped, as those who have escaped domestic violence.
- For widows and widowers that they will be comforted in their grief.

Add your own intentions here:

Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1-28)

As the mother of Samuel, her prayer would impact generations: Her son, Samuel would anoint both King Saul and King David, paving the way for the birth of the nation of Israel. Consider praying with her song of praise (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

- For parents and godparents that they will teach their child/children how to pray.
- For couples struggling with infertility.
- For all Christians, to be given the grace to pray like Hannah: as if everything depended on them and to trust because they believe everything depends on God.

Add your own intentions here:

The serving girl of Naaman's wife (2 Kings 5:1-19)

She was one of the spoils of war.

- For those who are victims of war, especially children.
- For healing of all veterans, whatever nationality.
- For world peace and those who work for peace.

Add your own intentions here:

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New Testament

Mother of Peter and Andrew (John 1:40-42) Although not present in the text itself, one can imagine the moment she let her sons go to follow Jesus. As she does so, she must have the unspoken question, "Who will care for me should my husband die before I do?"

- For parents that they encourage a culture of vocation in their homes.
- For parents and family members who discourage a religious vocation.
- For those who are discerning their vocation, that they will be given the grace of commitment and perseverance.

Add your own intentions here:

The Woman at the Well (John 4:5-42)



"Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well," detail, circa 1420 (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

What began with a simple request led to a liturgical discussion between a theologian in the making and the Source of theology. Their dialogue led to a whole town encountering Jesus.

- For all those who hunger and thirst for truth.
- For theologians of all faith communities, that they may be given discernment and insight.

- For the indifferent, lukewarm in their faith that they may encounter Jesus and in turn reach out to others.

Add your own intentions here:

Anna, prophetess and contemplative (Luke 2:36-38)

The word *prophet* comes from the Greek *prophētēs*, meaning "one who speaks before others" in communicating divine revelation. In this section, Luke not only names Anna a prophetess, he shows her acting out her role in announcing the presence of Jesus. She was also a contemplative as she lived with an open heart, waiting on the Lord, as well as present to the Holy in the Temple.

- For the elderly, who wait in patient expectation for the moment Jesus will come to them.
- For those who are afraid to die.
- For those who help others in discernment, enabling people to discover the divine in their lives.

Add your own intentions here:

Woman with a hemorrhage (Mark 5:25-34)

"She received treatment at the hands of doctors ... she only grew worse."

- For those whose medical conditions have been dismissed by their doctors, "being told it's all in your head."
- For those who are having a difficult time getting a diagnosis for their condition.
- For those who are living with severe chronic illness.
- For doctors, that they can learn to listen to their patients, especially women, who are too often dismissed in their search for medical help.

Add your own intentions here:

There may be other women of the Bible, besides the above, to whom you feel close and could pray with. All the women of the Bible — the famous, the infamous and the invisible — are in some way role models for our prayer. Yes, even the infamous, for they, too, are part of salvation history. They are there, inviting us to listen to the God who speaks to us and intercede on so many who are in need.

Editor's note: *This column uses material from talks and retreat days the author gave, based on her book of poetry —* she: robed and wordless*.*