

# Age doesn't matter

Georgina Byrne *reflects on* Genesis 12:1-4a

**M**ost seventy-five-year-olds might reasonably assume that, after working hard, raising a family and engaging with the local community, they can expect some peace. Poor Abram is not so lucky. At that age God commands him to leave his home and travel to “the land that I will show you” – as yet undisclosed. His wife Sarai and nephew Lot are dragged into this escapade, too. All of this, of course, happens before he fathers two children – first Ishmael with Hagar and then Isaac with Sarai, when he is a hundred years old.

Abram, or Abraham as he becomes, knows that for God age is unimportant. When God invites him to an adventure he ups sticks and leaves with all the expectation of an optimistic youngster. He sees the world with fresh eyes, ready to explore and ready to be surprised by what God can do.

Age doesn't matter when we follow God's promptings. When I was Director of Ordinands, the oldest person I presented to the bishop for ordination was sixty-seven. She was one of the most vibrant, imaginative and inspiring priests I know. We may not have the energy for moving house or even being ordained, but, whatever our age, we can be challenged and surprised by God in our life if we keep our hearts alive to the possibility. 🍷

**God of adventure, challenge me. God of life, surprise me. God of compassion, travel with me. Open my eyes and ears, my mind and heart, to the places where I will find you today. Amen.**



## Perpetua, Felicity and companions

by Alan Jefferies

Perpetua, Felicity and Companions are commemorated in the *Common Worship* lectionary on Saturday. Their story illuminates the brutality and violence to which early Christians were subjected.

In AD 203, during the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus, a young Roman noblewoman named Perpetua had recently married and become a mother. Her slave Felicity was also in the late stages of pregnancy. Their companions included three men named Saturninus, Secundulus

and Revocatus. All five were catechumens (committed Christians who were not yet baptised). To this group was added a sixth, named Saturus, who voluntarily went before the magistrate and proclaimed himself a Christian.

The detailed diary Perpetua kept during their imprisonment is one of the earliest known first-hand accounts of martyrdom. According to her account, they were arrested and executed in military games to celebrate emperor's birthday. Perpetua envisioned herself doing battle not merely with wild beasts, but with the devil as well. 🍷

## Some things you might not know about Lent

by Caroline Hodgson

In AD 325 the Council of Nicaea formalised Lent as a period of preparation for Easter. It was originally called “*tessarakosta*” (in Greek) or “*quadagesima*” (in Latin) – both referring to forty days. The word Lent, derived from the Old English “*lencten*”, meaning “spring”, came into use from the twelfth century.

In some early Christian traditions, Lent lasted forty hours, to symbolise the length of time Jesus spent in the tomb. By around the fourth century, it had become a week long. Only later

was it extended to forty days, to echo Bible stories such as Noah's flood (Genesis 7:17), Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:18) and, of course, the time Jesus spent in the wilderness.

The forty days of Lent don't actually include Sundays. Every Sunday is considered a “mini Easter” a day of celebrating Christ's resurrection.

As well as being observed by Anglicans and Catholics, Lent is observed in the Lutheran, Moravian and Orthodox traditions, among others. In all of these the spirit of the season – turning away from sin and towards God – remains central. 🍷

“**Lent is a time of going very deeply into ourselves... What is it that stands between us and God? Between us and our brothers and sisters? Between us and life, the life of the Spirit? Whatever it is, let us relentlessly tear it out, without a moment's hesitation.**”

Catherine Doherty (1896-1985), Catholic social activist