

GENESIS 16:1-5 HOPE + PATIENCE = FAITH

¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; ² so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her."

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³ So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴ He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."

True faith has two practical elements: hope and patience. Our trust in the One who has given the promises is the basis of our hope that those promises will be realized. It is that hope that keeps us from falling into despair. There is never a reason to give up as long as we trust God as he has revealed himself to us through history, Scripture, the Church and his Holy Spirit. We know ourselves to be a part of his story, and he has revealed that he has already written the conclusion.

However, when we have hope, but lack patience we often succumb to desperation. The doubts begin to arise in our minds, not about God and his promises, but about our role in realizing the promises. As time passes, we like Sarai and Abram, begin to wonder if there isn't something we need to be doing to bring the promise to pass. And what a mess of it we make. Often our action does make good sense from our worldly perspective. As an example, in his culture, what Abram did was a common practice. The question the person of faith must ask is, "Does this action accord with God's revealed will?" In other words, we need to make sure that the means are as justified as the ends. True faith dictates that we trust God not only for the fulfillment of his promises, but also for the perfect timing and method of their realization.

Lord, so often when I focus on your promises and their fulfillment, the only timing I consider is my timing, which tends to be immediate. Do I dare pray for patience? Yes, I must; for you are the author of my life as well as that of the world. Give me the patience that will perfect my faith. Amen.