

6th Day St. Anne Novena
The Kings
(St. Mary Magdalene)

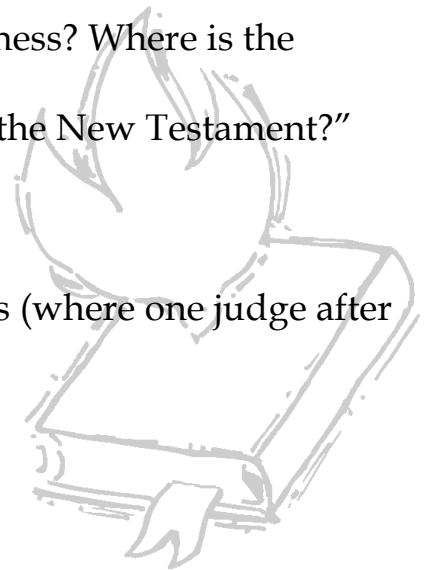
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
July 22, 2025

Songs 3: 1-4b
Ps 63: 2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9
Jn 20: 1-2, 11-18

As we are now journeying through the last few days of this St. Anne Novena, we continue to talk about the death, destruction, violence and the wars that resulted from all this Old Testament infidelity. We have discussed that for anyone who thinks that the bible is “boring,” obviously they have not read these stories of conquest and betrayal that you would find in action movies and blood fests that make millions of dollars on the television or movie screens yet often collect dust on the same people’s bookshelves.

I keep thinking to myself as I walk through this journey with all of you, “Where is the love and where is the tenderness? Where is the kindness and the ‘love thy neighbor’ we find in the New Testament?” That is yet to come at the end of this story.

As we last discussed in the story of the judges (where one judge after



another fell and turned away from God, resulting in the people under their care going their own way because they did not have a king), we begin our journey of the kings with the story of Hannah, an elderly barren woman who offered this great prayer to God in the second chapter of the 1 Samuel. The prayer was the result of the Lord gifting her with the last of the great judges, her son Samuel.

The character of Samuel was commissioned by God to find a king to unite the twelve tribes of Israel. Instead of having judges or warlords protecting each individual tribe, God would allow the Chosen People to be united under one king who would take care of all of them, in God's name. At first, Samuel chooses a man named Saul as king. As we learn in the story, Saul was not a good choice; this individual ended up doing some pretty terrible things against God's will.

Samuel makes a second attempt to choose a king – in this case, he picks the youngest son of a man named Jesse, the son who was tending the field when Samuel arrived to visit the family. Being the youngest son, David was considered the “least” of the sons, at least according to Jewish custom (to use a metaphor from Prince Harry of England, David

might be considered (the sixth “spare” of the “heir”). Despite his age and position in the family (similar to the “sibling rivalry” stories we addressed on the second day of this Novena), David was selected by God to be the one who would unite all the kingdoms together.

We are told in this story that David was very musically talented and was very intelligent; David had great wisdom in some ways (he must have been effective as a leader – a third of the songs in the Book of Psalms were attributed to him!). As a king, David was able to do great things at the beginning of his reign, especially when the previous king Saul tried to kill him. On two occasions when Saul tried to take David’s life, David spared Saul’s life as an act of compassion.

As the story in 1 & 2 Samuel tells us, David had all kinds of wonderful things going for him until he got tempted by the vice of lust when he encountered a married woman bathing in her house while he watched her from above. David had relations with this woman and, when he found the woman was pregnant, ended up having her husband killed in a war which David ordered. Because of David’s great infidelity, God killed the son. Subsequently, David did marry the woman and she

bore a second son named Solomon.

In 2 Samuel, David disobeyed God a second time and his people suffered grievously for that sin as well. After a 40-year reign in uniting all the kingdoms, we are told that David the king left the world and passed on the kingship to Solomon. At the beginning of 1 Kings, Solomon was given the responsibility of building the great temple that would house the Ark of the Covenant from the time of Moses. a temple in Jerusalem that would serve as the central worship site for all the kingdoms. When the project was completed, Solomon's priests moved the Ark of the Covenant (which held the commandments of God) into what was called "The Holy of Holies" in which only the priests could enter) and the unification of these tribes was complete.

We are told in 1 Kings that God wanted to "gift" Solomon with he wanted. Instead of choosing riches, fame, fortune or popularity, Solomon chose "Sophia" (= Wisdom), the ability to know right from wrong. For a while in this story, the choice of Wisdom served Solomon well during his forty year rule.

Alas, similar to his father David, Solomon became weak and fell to

temptation. Instead of worshipping the one God that protected the Chosen People, Solomon allowed his wives and followers to worship secular gods, which caused God to respond, telling Solomon that after his forty year reign, the kingdoms would divide as a result of his infidelity.

After Solomon's death, God fulfilled this promise – the kingdom was divided, with ten tribes making up the Northern Kingdom of Israel and two tribes making up the Southern Kingdom of Judah. As predicted by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, all the kingdoms ended up falling due to the infidelity of her leaders. After Solomon died, we encountered a series of northern kings that continued to be disobedient to God. Many prophets such as Amos and Hosea warned those in the northern kingdom to change their ways or lose their land. Neither the leaders nor the people of the northern kingdom listened, which resulted in the Assyrian army destroying the northern kingdom in 722 BC and dispersing the Chosen People into what scripture scholars call “the lost tribes of Israel.”

As for the southern kingdom of Judah, the people continued on for another 140 years or so. The southern kingdom were blessed with three *good* kings (Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah) but the rest were just as corrupt as their northern counterparts. Prophets such as Isaiah and Micah warned the kings and residents of the south to change their ways or lose their lands (similar to what Amos and Hosea did with the northern kingdom).

As the story is told, in 586 BC, Jeremiah the prophet made a last ditch effort to try and save the people of the northern kingdom from their impending destruction. The kings and residents of the south did not listen to Jeremiah, either (at one point, they tried to kill him!). As a result, the kings and people lost their southern kingdom because of their infidelity as well.

In the stories from Samuel and Kings, we read the plight of one king after another who were supposed to follow the will of God but did not, one king after another who was supposed to have that spirit of God within their hearts to lead and guide the people of faith, only to turn to

other gods and the ways of evil. As a result, the kingdoms of the south suffered because of the infidelity of their leaders.

As scholars tell us, in the Old Testament (the Hebrew scriptures), possession of the land was directly in correlation to how faithful the Chosen People were to their Lord and God. Because of their infidelity, the kings and their residents lost their lands because of the evil that resulted from their infidelity to God and the covenant.

Where was the love in all of these stories? Where was the compassion? What gives me hope in the stories of the judges and kings is that even when the apostles became weak during our Lord's suffering and crucifixion, even while they were hiding when turning away from Jesus, we Mary Magdalene, the mother of our Lord and, in one gospel only, the apostle whom Jesus loved at the foot of the cross. We read how Mary Magdalene is considered "the apostles to the apostles" because of her faith and because God decided to appear to her *first* because of her unwavering love for God, even in the face of evil that would fall her for staying faithful to the Lord at the time of his death.

Even in the midst of sadness and suffering, Mary Magdalene approached the empty tomb out of love for God. While the apostles were hiding, she had enough faith to seek out the Lord. In response, angels and the Lord himself revealed themselves to her and told her to seek out the apostles and announce that Jesus Christ was going to his father.

Because of her witness of this resurrection, we encounter a story from the gospel of John which tells us that Jesus commissioned her to take care of the apostle, to serve as the apostles' apostle. When we encounter these kinds of loving people (and we do not find these kind of people all that often in life), we hold on to them because they model God's love in a way by which we need to learn.

For this reason, it is so important to hold on to God because God is good; God is love; God is tender; God is compassion and sacrificial and merciful. When we understand what St. Mary Magdalene symbolizes more than the judges or kings ever could, then we understand why we are walking through this Novena together. These stories of infidelity from the Old Testament are important to understand because we learn

how *not* to live like these unfaithful individuals. We learn that where these judges and kings had failed, our Blessed Mother did not. We learn that a small remnant in the world (to reference Pope Benedict XVI) do not succumb to the evils in the world such as Mary Magdalene, St. Anne and certainly our Blessed Mother, who was born without the stain of Original Sin. Often we in the secular world disregard these women because in the Old Testament times (and even in the First Century), women were not given much esteem.

Notice, though, how these specific women characters were the ones who showed that compassion, that heart and that love which we need in order to get to the other side; please do not forget that. Maybe this is an opportunity for us to go to our moms or our grandmothers or our daughters and granddaughters who really have that heart of God and that love of God in their lives (and certainly we can apply this to our sons, grandsons, fathers and grandfathers of today's age as well). Perhaps today we can show them what Mary Magdalene had shown the Lord, an unwavering faith that sin cannot vanquish. Mary Magdalene

turned away from what was evil in the world to focus on what was GOOD and tender and loving; that is what gets us to heaven.

God bless all of you. Keep praying for me and I keep praying for you during the Novena every single night, as we offer these prayers for you, the people who attend these Novena Masses in these churches and for all people that we meet. This is our prayer.