

informal settings and unplanned happenings as occasions to speak of my relationship with God.

John Drescher



WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED THE LORD

This month: Eunice and Lois

Eunice and Lois are the mother and grandmother of Timothy, who became the deeply loved helper of St. Paul. Paul came to care for Timothy so much that, having no wife or children of his own, he referred to the young man as "my dearly beloved son" in II Timothy 1:2.

Paul also credited Timothy's mother and grandmother with having instilled a strong faith in their boy. Paul writes, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you" (II Timothy 1:5). Lois is the only woman in the Bible to whom the word "grandmother" is applied. Paul was well aware of the powerful effects of a grandmother's, and a mother's, faith on an impressionable young person. He would certainly understand and applaud the appreciation so many of us have for the examples set by our grandmothers.

Eunice and Lois raised Timothy in Lystra, a city in the province of Galatia in Rome. His father had been a Greek and had died while Timothy was very young; we do not even know the father's name. His mother was born a Jew, and we do not know exactly when she converted to the Christian faith. Lois also converted with her, most probably, and we may assume that like so many converts, they were zealous in their faith and worked together to give Timothy a good Christian grounding. Without a man to contribute to the family's livelihood, they probably had little money, but like many other people of faith, they were not hindered by that. Saint Paul received Timothy into Christianity at the age of fifteen, during his visit to Lystra in the year 45 (approximately). On his second visit to Lystra, Paul, having just separated painfully from Barnabas, invited Timothy to come preach the Gospel with himself and Silas.

This was a moment of truth for Eunice and Lois. They must have known that Timothy's road with Paul and Silas would be neither easy nor safe; Paul had already had some harrowing experiences and made himself most unpopular with some of the authorities and Jewish leaders by his

preaching. The two women would be left on their own, unable even to communicate readily with their boy as he traveled far and wide. It was a time of that difficult "giving up" of their child that all parents face, but made more intensely so, perhaps, by the conditions under which they knew Timothy would be living.

But Eunice and Lois also knew that this was, in fact, what they had prepared and trained Timothy for. They had "raised up their child" in the way he should go and could be confident that he "would not depart from it," as the writer of Proverbs (22:6) says. They had before them the example of Hannah who had given up her son Samuel to the Lord's work and, most importantly, the example of Mary the *Asdvadzadzin* herself, whose giving up of a son was the greatest the world had known.

Paul knew what a good person he was getting in Timothy, and the two were to be together longer than Paul stayed with any of his other companions. Not only that, but Paul sent him on the most delicate missions and put him in charge of the largest, most important congregations. Paul well knew how much of Timothy's trustworthiness and competence were the result of Lois and Eunice having raised him as they did, and reminded Timothy of this:

"Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:12-15).

It would be hard to find a better tribute to the power of a good motherly example. Paul did not have children of his own, but he recognized the source of Timothy's good qualities nevertheless. In this month of May and Mother's Day, Lois and Eunice show us how, without becoming well-known or powerful, they did become immortalized because of the great effort they made, and the good fruit for God that they produced in Timothy.

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