

*Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time*  
*June 13, 2021*  
*Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #22)*

*“Know therefore that the Lord your God is the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations . . .” (Deuteronomy 7:9)*

It is important that, before we move on, we define this word “Covenant” and how it differs from the other word— “Promise”. We are all familiar with the promise—vow—exchanged in the Sacrament of Matrimony. *I take you to be my wife/husband. I promise to be faithful to you, in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love you and to honor you all the days of my life.* This promise, made by each to the other, carries no defined consequences for either, should the promise be broken by one of them.

On the other hand, a covenant defines clear obligations for those who enter into it and provides distinct responsibilities for all. A covenant is thus perpetual for both parties with consequences for breaking its obligations, as we have seen so far in our reflections. The verse at the top of this handout provides some insight. God pledges His undying love and faithfulness to be freely given for all eternity to **those who love him and keep his commandments**. We all understand the consequences.

Over the course of the last several weeks, our reflections have centered on God’s covenants with man. First, came God’s covenant with Adam; a covenant that instituted the first sacrament, that of marriage between a man and a woman. Next, came the covenant with Noah, producing the family unit for the sharing of God’s love. The last covenant that we have looked at so far, was God’s covenant with Abraham [Abram]. We will soon see this covenant manifest itself in families joining together in tribal union. Each is not only a continuation of God’s first covenant, but each raises the scope, moving God’s covenant of love one step closer to fulfillment in the Incarnation of Jesus.

Our reflection last week ended with Abraham and his son Isaac on the mountain of sacrifice. Fr. Saucier concluded with two questions: *Was God’s promise to Abraham, after this most obedient act of being fully willing to sacrifice his son, fulfilled?* and, *Did God provide Abraham with descendants more numerous than he could have imagined?* Let’s examine the answer to these questions.

The story continues this week with young Isaac now all grown up and married to Rebekah, the daughter of his father’s brother. Rebekah has given birth to twin sons—Esau, a mighty hunter, and Jacob, described as a simple man. Rebekah and Isaac have conspired to gain his older brother, Esau’s birthright and blessing from an ailing Abraham. Jacob, in fear for his life at the hands of his brother, has fled to his mother’s homeland, to the home of his uncle Laban. After falling in love with Laban’s younger daughter, Rachel, working for seven years to win her hand, he is tricked by his uncle into a marriage with her older sister Leah. Jacob, angered and still very much in love with Rachel, agrees to serve Laban an additional seven years to be allowed to also marry Rachel. From these two marriages will come twelve sons—the twelve who would become the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel.

We can now see the beginnings of the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. This tale has been fraught with the pride, greed and selfishness of man. In spite of this, at this point in the continuing story, God has set the stage for the fulfillment of his covenant that is to come.

The lesson for us today is God’s faithfulness to his covenant of love. The verse at the top of this handout, is only one of many verses throughout Sacred Scripture, that proclaims God’s faithfulness. It is displayed vividly during the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is displayed, leaving no doubt in the life, death and resurrection of God’s own son. It is exclusively available to us through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Should we not, also, remain faithful to our own obligations and responsibilities found in God’s covenant of love?