

***Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time***  
***September 11, 2022***  
***Year of Saint Joseph***

*“Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”*  
*(Matthew 5:37)*

Our first reading this morning is taken from the 32nd chapter of the Book of Exodus. We listened as God informed Moses of the peoples’ abandonment through the fashioning and worshipping of the molten calf. In His anger, God decides to destroy the children of Israel. Moses, standing in the face of God’s righteous anger, chooses to act. He intercedes for the people “reminding” God of the patriarchs and His promise to Abraham thereby calming God’s wrath. Do we realize that this scene from the Old Testament is again happening right here before our very eyes? Allow me to offer an explanation.

To understand this scene, we must first ask ourselves this question: What “substantially” separates the children of Israel from us today, besides time or location? I use the word “substantially” in a deliberate way because we could list a multitude of smaller insignificant ways (clothing, foot wear, cooking utensils, etc.) we are different from the children of Israel. I would propose to you that we are not different from the children of Israel. Rather, we are very much akin to them for we are both liars; and yes, you have heard me correctly, I have just called all of us liars. If this were an old western from Hollywood, someone would be reaching for their trusty six shooter and challenging me to a duel at high noon. Old Hollywood westerns have taught many that you never, ever call someone yellow (a coward), a cheat or a liar. And yet, if we are honest, are not both we and the children of Israel liars?

Our reading this morning, from the Book of Exodus, began with verse 7 in chapter 32. We were not, however, reminded of verse 7 in chapter 24. Listen now as I recount chapter 24 and quote verse 7. Moses had just read to the people all the words and ordinances of the book of the covenant which God wanted to establish with them. Verse 7 is their response to God - *“All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”* Their actions (worship of the molten calf) in chapter 32 prove their words (we will be obedient) in chapter 24 were words without meaning. They lied to God and stirred up His anger.

We are no different. We to swear obedience to God and offer few actions upholding our promises. Before you think me mad, I will prove this to you in one word – Confession. The Sacrament of Reconciliation was established explicitly for that point. We failed by our actions to uphold the promises, to follow God living by His commands, made at our Baptism. Those same promises we affirm repeating each year at Easter. I second this, reminding all of the promise we make as we recite the Act of Contrition during the Sacrament as we promise “to avoid the nearest occasion of sin.” We have lied to God and stirred up His anger.

Next, something quite extra ordinary happens for both the children of Israel and us. We could sum this up in a word – intercession. As Moses interceded to God on behalf of the people, so does Jesus Christ intercede for us. Adding to this, we can read in the Book of Exodus how Moses would continue, from this point on, to intercede to God on behalf of the children of Israel. Tired

and heartbroken from the continued stubbornness of the people to desire their own will over their God, nevertheless, Moses continued to intercede. Likewise, Jesus, Himself heartbroken from our sinful behavior, nevertheless intercedes continually on our behalf asking forgiveness. He does this perfectly by providing His church a means to offer a perpetual sacrifice of forgiveness for sins. That sacrifice – His Sacrifice – the unbloody representation of His Sacrifice on Calvary – the Sacrifice of the Mass – is our Sacrifice of the Mass.