

Week 2 (August 15-21)

The Covenant Reaffirmed

Genesis 17:1-8

¹ When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless." ² And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." ³ Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴ "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. ⁸ And I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

Commentary:

The relationship between God and Abram/Abraham is special and instructive: On the one hand, here is God initiating an unheard-of covenant of love, and on the other there is a man responding with trust and faith. God gives a command, Abram obeys; God promises, Abram receives with total acceptance. Every time God directs Abram, scripture simply tells us: *And Abram went* (cf. Gen 12:4; 22:3). Although he does not see his future clearly, he trusts in the God of his future. Little wonder that Abraham is for us a model and father of faith. By his response to God we have become a **People of the Covenant**.

The change of name signifies a new identity, a coming-of-age as one who has passed a test enters into a new destiny. From Abram (meaning "exalted father" of a small, relatively obscure tribe) he is renamed Abraham, the "father of a multitude" of believers who shall be blessed because of him.

It is to Abraham that the terms of the covenant are made concrete: God promises a *land* to be the "everlasting possession" of Abraham and his descendants. Land is vital for life; nations go to war for land. Even up to today, there is strife in the "Holy Land" over territories and national boundaries. Christians, however, understand the promise of *land* to be fulfilled, not in the conquest of Canaan but in the victory of Christ on the cross; it is fulfilled now

by our living the life of the Spirit; it will be completely fulfilled as we enter heaven, the land of Endless Day.

For Reflection:

1. In this passage, God reaffirms his promise to Abraham and recommits himself to the terms of his covenant. In your life, too, God continually reassures you of his love. Again and again he commits himself to you and your well-being (cf. Jeremiah 29:11). Think about that; praise and thank God for it.
2. Do a *lectio divina* on this passage.
3. The promise of *land* is fulfilled in our lives on many levels.
 - First, there are numerous material blessings you have received. For what material things are you most grateful to the Lord?
 - Then, you have received immaterial blessings which are vital to your well-being: health, hope, happiness; the love of family and friends; and the like. Thank God for these things, too.
 - Now recall that, in Christ his Son, God the Father "has blessed us ... with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3). Here is *land* in its fullness: the blessings *in the Spirit* which even now we receive and enjoy. So praise and thank God for the blessings of conversion, forgiveness, being his son/daughter, living in Christian community, etc.

Scripture-Prayer:

"I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!
Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage;
yes, wait for the LORD!" (*Psalms* 27:13-14)

Intercession:

Let's pray for the "fathers" of *Ligaya*: our founding leaders (like Fr. Herb and Tito Vic Gutierrez); Tony Panajon who now serves as the president of the Sword of the Spirit Asian Region; Spanky Meer, our Senior Head Coordinator; the natural fathers who are heads of families in *Ligaya*; our Coordinators.