

The Bible Corner

Cindy Cottone



A Very Special Promise

Have you ever made a promise to someone? Were you always able to keep your promise?

Sometimes, a promise has to be broken — and there is only one instance in which you can know for sure that a promise will never be broken. That is when the promise has been made by God.

In the Old Testament, when God made a promise to the Jewish people, it was a very sacred agreement called a covenant. The covenant that God made with His people was His eternal love and protection. This covenant was also a promise on the part of the Jews to obey God always.

After the Jews had left Egypt, they traveled for 40 years in the desert in search of the Promised Land. Moses was their leader, and God spoke to Moses about how He wanted things done.

One day, God commanded Moses to build an ark. The ark was a very large wooden chest that was plated with precious gold. There were to be four rings at the bottom corners. Through these rings were placed two long poles, so that the ark could be transported by the Jews.

This ark, which was to be the symbol of God's sacred promise to the Jews, was called the Ark of the Covenant. Inside it, as God commanded, Moses placed the Ten Commandments.

The Ark of the Covenant was so sacred to the Jews that they even brought it into battle with them. Once, they were defeated in a war with their enemies, the Philistines. The victorious Philistines took the Ark, and God was so angry that He sent a plague to punish them until they returned the Ark to the Jews.

Many sacred rules were made concerning the Ark, which was to be handled only by the priests. When King David and his men once attempted to

transport the Ark, one of the servants touched it and was stricken dead.

Finally, after many years, King David's son, King Solomon, constructed a beautiful temple for the glory of God. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in a special area in the temple to serve as a reminder of God's promise to his people.

For discussion:

What does God promise us today?

If you are interested in reading more about the Ark of the Covenant in the Bible, turn to the following verses:

- 1) How was the Ark made: Exodus 25:10-22.
- 2) How the Philistines are punished when they take the Ark: 1 Samuel:4-5.
- 3) Traveling with the Ark: 2 Samuel 6:1-11.
- 4) King Solomon places the Ark in the temple: 1 Kings 8:1-8.

For further reading:

"Ruth" by Maud and Miska Petersham (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1938). The story of Ruth is the Old Testament story of a promise made by a young girl to her husband's mother, Naomi. When Ruth's husband died, she left her own people to go with Naomi into the land of Judah. Ruth promised Naomi that she would never leave her. "Whither thou goest, I will go," Ruth told Naomi. "Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God."

"Where the Lilies Bloom" by Vera and Bill Cleaver (New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1969). Mary Call Luther is 14 and lives in the mountains of North Carolina. Her father, Roy, is a sharecropper, and the family is very poor. Roy Luther, who is dying, begs his daughter to promise to keep his death a secret so that the family will not be sent to the county home. This is a story of courage and strength in the face of extreme difficulty.

On the Right Side

Father Paul J. Cuddy



Why do the young leave?

The youth who wrote the letter printed below is not from our Webster parish, but he is from the Rochester area. Because I highly regard his perception, I had written to ask him why he thought so many of the young are leaving the Church, especially those who have had a Catholic high school education, in which the religion courses should be reasonably clear and thorough.

He gives a splendid apologia for the Jesuits with whom he is acquainted, and a special appreciation of McQuaid's Father O'Malley, whose goodness and talents have never been doubted by me. But I do not think his conclusion about parental ignorance is quite the answer to the question of defections of the young.

He writes as follows:

"Dear Father,
"Let me give you my thoughts about the Jesuits in general, and Fordham in particular. Certainly they are the most prestigious order within the Church, and have gone through periods of crisis before. Here at Fordham, I think the Jesuit faculty is excellent, not only in the educational processes, but in missionary work as well. I must make myself clear. I consider this whole area in the Bronx a missionary place, and only the Jesuits have remained. Certainly there seems to be little hope for the Bronx or New York City, yet the Jesuits remain and are even sacrificing one of their top institutions in the hope that something will be salvaged.

"It would be logical to move the university to Westchester, where I'm sure it would thrive and even become one of the best universities in the country — yet (the Jesuits) elect to remain in the South Bronx. About 90 percent of the 12,000 students here at Fordham come from reasonably wealthy

and educated backgrounds. The fact that they see this degradation around them is a way of teaching, and the Jesuits were the first to realize this.

"I do worry sometimes that some of the Jesuits get caught up in the materialistic aspects of life. They are on the whole a very pious group of men. They embrace such a wealth of education that it is regrettable that some of the bad apples get so much media attention. Would it not be better to focus on the innumerable good deeds they do every day? In the United States, it seems to me that the only priests that give consistently great sermons are the Jesuits.

"Getting onto a more personal level, concerning Father O'Malley: he may be a little emotional or bizarre at times, but the fact remains that he is an exceptional teacher who is able to get the most out of even the most obstinate students. He is a very dedicated Christian, and his sermons are consistently brilliant.

"I think that in the coming years, you will see a marked change in the new Jesuits. They seem more stable in their religion, and I'm sure they will pose no problems for the Church.

"Concerning our youth and their relative flight from the Church, I am disheartened. I concluded that the (fact that) droves of youth (are) departing the Church is not their fault completely, but (that) of their parents (as well). It seems that the older generation is ignorant of the teachings of the Church, and therefore, no religion gets passed down to the kids. This is the only explanation for such widespread leaving of the Church. I hope this answers your question as to why the young are leaving."

Readers of this column are invited to address this problem from their own observations and experience.

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