

Cindy Bassett

# The Bible Corner



## A little faith

Eliezer's gaze extended first to Abraham and then to Abraham's son, Isaac. He shared a long history with them both. Eliezer was the chief steward of all that Abraham owned, but there was much more between them than just the trust that exists between a master and a servant. Since Sara had died, Eliezer and Abraham had become close friends.

"Isaac has grown into a fine man," Eliezer commented as he came up to Abraham. "You have taught him well!"

"Thank you," Abraham replied. "But I am a bit concerned about him. Isaac has not been the same since Sara passed on."

"He's always been so sensitive," Eliezer remarked, "and he was very close to his mother."

"I have thought of a solution. It's time for Isaac to have a wife of his own," Abraham announced. "And you, my faithful servant, are going to find her!"

"Do you realize what you are asking?" Eliezer stammered. "Certainly I am flattered; you have trusted me with all that you own. But this — this is different. Should not Isaac choose his own wife?"

"None of the Caananite women from these parts would be right for Isaac," Abraham went on, ignoring Eliezer's objections. "They worship idols. No, for Isaac's bride, I will send you back to the old country, to the land of my birth. I still have relatives living in Ur. Surely there is someone eligible among them!"

"If that's the case, then why not let Isaac accompany me to Ur? Eliezer suggested. "The whole matter would be much simpler if Isaac married and settled there."

"No!" Abraham said firmly. "I shall see my grandchildren born here in Canaan, so they can inherit the land just as the Lord has promised. Eliezer, a little faith is all that is needed here."

Eliezer hesitated. It would not be right to argue with his master on any point, especially on matters of faith. But Eliezer didn't understand about this faith Abraham spoke of so often.

"Master, I have just one more small question that troubles me," Eliezer began. "What shall I do if the intended bride does not wish to leave her family and come back with me to a strange land to marry a man she has never met?"

Abraham smiled broadly, saying, "Then

I shall release you from the oath you shall make to me."

"What oath?" Eliezer queried.

"That you shall not look anywhere but Ur for a wife for Isaac," Abraham stated.

"I swear to this oath," Eliezer promised, still frowning.

Eliezer left for Ur the very next day with 10 of Abraham's finest camels loaded with presents for the bride and her family. "Don't look so worried, Eliezer," Abraham said as he bid his servant farewell. "Trust the whole matter to God and give my best regards to my relatives."

It was several days' journey from Canaan to Ur. Throughout the trip, Eliezer uttered only one prayer: "Please, Lord give me the same faith that you have given to Abraham!"

Finally one day, late in the afternoon, Eliezer approached Ur. The timing of Eliezer's arrival was already part of the answer to his prayer. For this was the time of the day when all of the women of the village came to the well to draw water for their households.

A small seed of faith had started to grow in Eliezer's heart, and suddenly he had an idea. "Oh, Lord," he prayed, bowing his head, "I shall ask one of these women for a drink of water. One will reply: 'Yes, here is some refreshment for you and allow me to water your camels, too.' Let this woman be the one you have selected to be Isaac's wife!"

Just as Eliezer looked up, a beautiful young girl was approaching. So he walked over to her and asked, "May I have a drink? I have come a great distance."

"Certainly, sir," she replied. "When you have finished refreshing yourself, I will draw water for your camels."

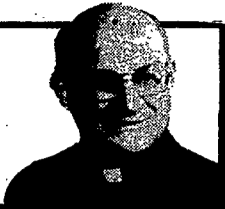
Later that day, Eliezer went with the woman, whose name was Rebekah, to the home of her father, Bethuel. Bethuel, as it turned out, was Abraham's only nephew. When Eliezer told his strange tale to Rebekah's family, it was clear to all that the day's events had been planned by God.

This story ends happily for all. Isaac married Rebekah, and Abraham had descendants. Eliezer, too, had a happy ending; he received the gift of faith — something he carried in his heart for the rest of his life.

Scripture Reference: Genesis, Chapter 24.

Father Albert Shamon

# A Word for Sunday



## Rock or stumbling stone

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mathew 16:21-27; (R1) Jeremiah 20:7-9; (R2) Romans 12:1-2

In last week's Gospel, Jesus promised Peter a new role: that of rock of the Church.

This week's Gospel presents a startling contrast, which is lost in our present translation.

In the Greek, Jesus calls Peter a *skandalon* — a stumbling-stone. Our liturgical translation refers to Peter as "causing one to trip and fall;" destroying the ironic contrast of the rock becoming a stumbling-stone.

Secondly, Jesus turns on Peter and says, "Get out of my sight, you Satan!" Jesus used the exact same words when He drove away Satan after the third temptation (Matthew 4:10) — *Hupage, Satana!* — only there it is translated, "Away with you, Satan!"

The point I want to make is that here, in the Peter incident, two words in the Greek are completely left out: *opiso mou*, which mean "behind me." Having spelled out the full meaning of Messiah, Jesus also spelled out the full meaning of disciple: one who follows a suffering Messiah, who can also carry a cross. Thus Jesus tells Peter to abandon his satanic role — "Get out of my sight, you Satan!" and to embrace his discipleship role — "Get behind me," take up the cross and begin to follow in my footsteps.

Around 42 A.D., Herod Agrippa launched a vicious campaign against Christians in his kingdom. He beheaded James, the brother of John, and arrested Peter, aiming to put him to death. After a miraculous release (Acts 12 ff), Peter left Jerusalem "to go to another place."

Eusebius states that Peter at this time divided the accessible parts of the world among the apostles for their personal evangelization. He himself stayed in the Near East, residing at Antioch seven years, evangelizing Asia Minor, and finally ending in Rome.

Eusebius says he went there to combat the terrible errors spread by Simon Magus (Acts 8:9ff), whose doctrines were "unholy" and "sordid." Simon Magus traveled with a female companion, Helen, and the

two encouraged their followers to worship them and engage in degrading secret rites.

According to *The Acts of Peter*, an historical novel from the second century, Simon Magus was able, through the power of Satan, to levitate high into the air. He challenged Peter publicly to try and stop him. Magus arose to the amazement of all, high above the ground. Peter prayed aloud to Jesus and Magus promptly plummeted to the ground, breaking his leg. Before he could limp away, the crowd, convinced that he was a false prophet, stoned him to death.

Peter's popularity increased from then on. Pagans were attracted to this man so "humble, meek, gentle, tender, loving and lovely." Roman converts asked John Mark to summarize Peter's words. He did in the Gospel of Mark.

On the night of July 19, 64 A.D., fire broke out in Rome. It burned out of control for nine days, destroying two-thirds of the city, killing hundreds. The Christians were blamed, and persecution ensued in 65 A.D. According to Tacitus, the Christians were clad in skins and torn to pieces by dogs. Some were crucified; others were lit to serve as torches at night. Paul was beheaded in 66 A.D.

Fearing Peter's death would cause the demise of the Church, Christians persuaded Peter to flee Rome. Outside the city of Rome is the Domine, Quo Vadis Chapel. It marks the spot where Peter had a vision of Christ walking toward Rome, carrying a cross.

Peter asked *Domine, quo vadis?* or "Lord, where are you going?"

Jesus answered, "I'm going to Rome to be crucified again, since Peter is running away."

Shamed, Peter returned to Rome. And on June 29, 67 A.D., he was crucified, upside down according to his own desire.

So ended the earthly career of the Rock, who had been a stumbling-stone, then fully a disciple. Peter was never a coward. But when he relied on himself, he became a stumbling stone. When he relied on the Lord, however, he became a rock!

## New support program seeks single parents

Park Ridge Mental Health Center is now accepting applicants for the Single Parent Family Program, a series of support groups and workshops designed for those who have experienced separation and divorce.

Groups will meet at Buckman Heights

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## 'At Home Retreats' scheduled

"At Home Retreats" will be given for a limited group of married women on Tuesday mornings from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. beginning September 15. The program, which is aimed at those mothers who have dreamed of making a retreat but have yet been unable to do so because of the demands of home and family life, is based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. It consists of 13 weekly, two-hour sessions, and will be given in the home of one of the participants.

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