

A reading from the Book of Genesis

The servant of Abraham said to Laban:

“I bowed down in worship to the Lord, blessing the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to obtain the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son. If, therefore, you have in mind to show true loyalty to my master, let me know; but if not, let me know that, too. I can then proceed accordingly.”

Laban and his household said in reply:

“This thing comes from the Lord; we can say nothing to you either for or against it. Here is Rebekah, ready for you; take her with you, that she may become the wife of your master’s son, as the Lord has said.”

So they called Rebekah and asked her,

“Do you wish to go with this man?”

She answered, “I do.”

At this they allowed their sister Rebekah and her nurse to take leave, along with Abraham’s servant and his men.

Invoking a blessing on Rebekah, they said:

“Sister, may you grow into thousands of myriads; And may your descendants gain possession of the gates of their enemies!”

Then Rebekah and her maids started out; they mounted their camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

Meanwhile Isaac had gone from Beer-lahai-roi and was living in the region of the Negeb. One day toward evening he went out . . . in the field, and as he looked around, he noticed that camels were approaching.

Rebekah, too, was looking about, and when she saw him, she alighted from her camel and asked the servant,

“Who is the man out there, walking through the fields toward us?”

“That is my master,” replied the servant.

Then she covered herself with her veil.

The servant recounted to Isaac all the things he had done.

Then Isaac took Rebekah into his tent; he married her, and thus she became his wife.

In his love for her Isaac found solace after the death of his mother Sarah.

**The Word of the Lord.** *R. Thanks be to God*

### **Commentary**

This text is but a piece of a larger story riddled with challenged relationships, unlikely children, and unforeseen circumstances. Key to the story is Abraham’s total faith that God will provide and guide. Abraham had left his homeland. Landing in Canaan at a very old age, his barren wife Sarah remarkably gives birth to their son, Isaac. When Sarah dies, Abraham looks to give Isaac a wife.

This snippet from that story appears to be a pre-arranged marriage, but a second consideration of the text reveals a marriage made by God. Abraham’s main intent is not to pick his son’s wife. Instead, he seeks the fulfillment of a promise made by God to give Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky. This reading from Genesis’ 24th chapter begins with verse 48. Previously in the chapter Abraham exhorted his servant Laban to pray to the Lord God, who had blessed him in all things (vs. 1). Prayer helps to verify that this process is done with God. Laban prays to be guided to the right young woman. Rebekah’s consent in the matter (vs. 58) verifies that she is participating in God’s will, not some coercive act. Isaac’s newfound comfort further confirms all this is God’s handiwork. Isaac does not merely accept her. He took her into his tent. He loved her, and they married.

The Catholic Rite of Marriage steers clear of any hint of arranged marriages. Like this passage from Genesis, the bride and groom first declare their own freedom and consent to marry before exchanging vows. Parents are not questioned. The rite does not envision anyone “giving the bride away.” In the eyes of the Church, both bride and groom are free individuals who have discerned their love is from God. For this reason, the Church directs that the entrance begin with the priest at the doors of the church greeting the bride and the groom, showing that the Church shares in their joy.