

Selected Paragraphs from The *Catechism*

(See Page 156 in the *Commentary*)

57 This state of division into many nations is at once cosmic, social and religious. It is intended to limit the pride of fallen humanity united only in its perverse ambition to forge its own unity as at Babel. But, because of sin, both polytheism and the idolatry of the nation and of its rulers constantly threaten this provisional economy with the perversion of paganism.

146 Abraham thus fulfills the definition of faith in *Hebrews* 11:1: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen": "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Because he was "strong in his faith", Abraham became the "father of all who believe".

147 The Old Testament is rich in witnesses to this faith. The Letter to the Hebrews proclaims its eulogy of the exemplary faith of the ancestors who "received divine approval". Yet "God had foreseen something better for us": the grace of believing in his Son Jesus, "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith".

59 In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred and his father's house, and makes him Abraham, that is, "the father of a multitude of nations". "In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."

762 The remote *preparation* for this gathering together of the People of God begins when he calls Abraham and promises that he will become the father of a great people. Its immediate preparation begins with Israel's election as the People of God. By this election, Israel is to be the sign of the future gathering of all nations. But the prophets accuse Israel of breaking the covenant and behaving like a prostitute. They announce a new and eternal covenant. "Christ instituted this New Covenant."

2570 When God calls him, Abraham goes forth "as the Lord had told him"; Abraham's heart is entirely submissive to the Word and so he obeys. Such attentiveness of the heart, whose decisions are made according to God's will, is essential to prayer, while the words used count only in relation to it. Abraham's prayer is expressed first by deeds: a man of silence, he constructs an altar to the Lord at each stage of his journey. Only later does Abraham's first prayer in words appear: a veiled complaint reminding God of his promises which seem unfulfilled. Thus one aspect of the drama of prayer appears from the beginning: the test of faith in the fidelity of God.

58 The covenant with Noah remains in force during the times of the Gentiles, until the universal proclamation of the Gospel. The Bible venerates several great figures among the Gentiles: Abel the just, the king-priest Melchisedek - a figure of Christ - and the upright "Noah, Daniel, and Job". Scripture thus expresses the heights of sanctity that can be reached by those who live according to the covenant of Noah, waiting for Christ to "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad".

1544 Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the "one mediator between God and men." The Christian tradition considers Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High," as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, the unique "high priest after the order of Melchizedek"; "holy, blameless, unstained," "by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified," that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross.

2374 Couples who discover that they are sterile suffer greatly. "What will you give me," asks Abraham of God, "for I continue childless?" And Rachel cries to her husband Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!"

2571 Because Abraham believed in God and walked in his presence and in covenant with him, the patriarch is ready to welcome a mysterious Guest into his tent. Abraham's remarkable hospitality at Mamre foreshadows the annunciation of the true Son of the promise. After that, once God had confided his plan, Abraham's heart is attuned to his Lord's compassion for men and he dares to intercede for them with bold confidence.