

DECEMBER 17 2025 FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

Our first reading, the story of Jacob, comes to the end of the book of Genesis, chapter 49. And Jacob, realizing that he is at the end of his life, calls together his 12 sons.

Now, it's very interesting to read the passage just before our reading today, because the first three sons of Jacob, Reuben, Simeon and Levi, obviously, Jacob should have praised them. Quite the contrary. He really lambastes them. He called them corrupt, lazy, worthless creature, worthless son.

And then he comes to Judah, and all the praise on Judah. Now, Scripture scholars tell us that this book of Genesis was written around the time of the monarchy of David, and David was from the tribe of Judah. And so, they fashioned it in such a way that Judah would get prominence at this time.

So, what we have here in the mouth of Jacob is both prophetic and a blessing: Judah, you will be the first of the tribe, and from you will come the Messiah. And that would lead us into the genealogy that we read today.

The genealogy in itself is a real tongue-twister and really, a hurdle for any priest or deacon who has to be reading it. You know, sometimes I wonder: why didn't they have simple names like Smith and Jones and Brown or Walsh and O'Brien or Flaherty? Easy names to pronounce.

Ironically, these names mean so much to us and we tend to say, "Well, why don't we skip it and go to something else?" We make a great mistake in doing that. In the letter to the Hebrews, we hear the words, "God, who through various times and in various places spoke to us

through the prophets, but now in the fullness of time, he speaks to us through the Son."

And in the responsorial psalm, we speak about God holding together all creation. So, isn't it important to know exactly how God spoke through the prophets? And God spoke through prophets who always spoke to the monarchs and the kings, and they told them exactly what to do.

So, who are these people? From Abraham to King David, from David to the Messiah, all these are very important.

So, let us start with Abraham: Abraham, our father in faith. To him God had promised, "Your sons will be as numerous as the sand on the shore." And God kept this promise in such a way that we find it awe-inspiring and a sense of wonder.

Abraham is the father in faith for three major religions: the Jewish religion, the Christian religion and the Muslim religion. And in that order, in fact. Because God called Abraham, and from Abraham we have the Israelites and Israel, and then we have the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and we as Christians believe in him. And the Muslims also confess that Abraham is a father in faith.

So, why do we try to fight among us because of religion? We all believe that this is the God of Abraham, who keeps his promises, and therefore, it's in this promise that you and I, the Jews, the Muslims and the Christians, carry on with their faith.

The second character that we deal with is David. King David, we look, and he is put on as a model of all kings. In fact, after David, any king that was mentioned, he was either good, like his ancestor David, or he was evil and did not follow in the footsteps of his ancestor David.

And yet when we look at David's life, David was an adulterer. He committed adultery with the wife of Uriah, Bathsheba, who was the father of Solomon. David was a murderer. He caused Uriah to be sent off at the head of the Hittite Empire, and he was killed. And finally, we have David who was proud and arrogant.

And yet, David realized that all his sins he acknowledged, and because he acknowledged his sins, he was considered blessed in the sight of God.

And finally, we come to five women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary. Now, the genealogy goes through men, so why will these five women be mentioned? It's because they have a very important part in the Jewish history.

It's surprising that we have Tamar, who was a Canaanite, Rahab, who was a Canaanite, Ruth, who was a Moabite; they were the enemies of the Israelites. And yet, they have an important part in the whole series of the Jewish history.

And that is why we look at the women in our own times, who have played an important part and very often are ignored. We have to stop and pay attention, because these are the people that will carry on the tradition of God, who wanted salvation for all people.

As we get into the season of Advent, we reflect on these first two things. First is the genealogy of Abraham, David and these five women, and how important are persons in our salvation history. And the second thing that we remember is we start the O Antiphons today, and the first one was "O Wisdom."

It's the wisdom that helps us to understand not only our genealogy but also, our journey in faith.

God bless you all.