

## EXODUS PART THREE: THE SINAI COVENANT

### Chapters 19-40

#### CHAPTER 19: Israel prepares to meet God

*“In the third month after their departure from the land of Egypt, on its first day, the Israelites came to the desert of Sinai. After the journey from Rephidim to the desert of Sinai, they pitched camp.*

*“While Israel was encamped here in front of the mountain, Moses went up the mountain to God. Then the Lord called to him and said, ‘Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob: tell the Israelites: you have seen for yourselves how I treated the Egyptians and how I bore you up on eagle wings and brought you here to myself. Therefore, if you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all other people, though all the earth is mine. You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. That is what you must tell the Israelites.’ So Moses went and summoned the elders of the people. When he set before them all that the Lord had ordered him to tell them, the people all answered together, ‘Everything the Lord has said, we will do.’ Then Moses brought back to the Lord the response of the people.” (vv 1-8)*

*“Moses led the people out of the camps to meet God....” (v.17)*

Chapters 19-24 of Exodus describe the high point of the Pentateuch. The events described can be divided into four stages.

- Israel prepares to meet God (Chapter 19)
- God gives Israel general laws: The Ten Commandments (Chapter 20:1-17)
- God gives Israel specific laws (Chapters 19:18–23:33)
- Sealing of the covenant between God and Israel (Chapter 24)

Three months after the Israelites leave Egypt, they arrive at Mount Sinai where they set up camp and where they will spend almost two years. In fact, Mount Sinai is the location for the events described in the rest of Exodus, the entire book of Leviticus, and Numbers chapters 1-10.

**Verses 1-8—God’s amazing proposal and Israel’s response.** After the people arrive at Sinai and set up camp, their leader Moses goes up the mountain to meet God who makes an astounding offer to the ragtag, disgruntled bunch of ex-slaves. God says to

the people through Moses: *“If you hearken to my voice and keep my covenant, you Israel shall be my special possession, dearer to me than to all other people on earth”* (v.5). God is offering to enter into a very special intimate relationship with Israel. Using marital imagery, which the prophets often did, God is asking for Israel’s hand in marriage.

When Moses comes down from the mountain and tells the elders and people of God’s marriage proposal or covenant offer, they jump at it: *“Everything the Lord has said, we will do”* (v.8). This may surprise us given the fact that a little while ago, they were asking Moses to take them back to the fleshpots of Egypt. As we will learn, the Israelites like most of us, are fickle and moody when it comes to their relationship with God.

Like most couples on their wedding day, the Israelites have little or no idea of what they are getting themselves into. As a people, they will be required to be holy as their God is holy (v.6). The requirements of their relationship with God will be spelled out in detail in chapters 20-23.

**Verses 9-15—Preparation for the theophany.** In these verses, God through his representative Moses, instructs the people on how they are to prepare themselves for the great theophany (manifestation of God on the third day). They must do three things: wash their garments, refrain from sexual intercourse, and observe the boundaries set by Moses around the holy mountain. The narrator tells us that one reason for the upcoming theophany is to bolster Moses’ credibility in the eyes of the people. In 19:9, God says to Moses: *“I am coming to you in a dense cloud, so that when the people hear me speaking with you, they may always have faith in you also.”* Scripture scholar John McDermott states: *“The Pentateuch strikes a balance between showing Moses as unique and separate from everyone else, and showing him as a fallible human being just like anyone else. Here the emphasis is on his unique closeness to God.”*

**Verses 16-19—The theophany.** The theophany is a volcanic eruption. The description shows God clearly as lord of nature. His power and majesty are very evident in the fire, smoke, and shaking of the mountain.

God's presence is announced by the trumpet blast of a *shofar* (ram's horn which is still used on some Jewish festivals). This is like our "Hail to the Chief" announcing the arrival of the President on formal occasions. Verses 20-25 are a second description from a different source or tradition. Most likely, the Israelites who were exposed to many gods in Egypt never experienced a God with such overwhelming power. What a contrast to the God who revealed himself in Jesus as a vulnerable child, as washer of feet and as a server of humanity.

**Pause:** Israel's 'shock and awe' experience of God was one they would remember for a long time. Have you had an experience of God that has deeply impacted your life?

## CHAPTER 20: God give Israel the Ten Commandments

*"I, the Lord, am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery. You shall not have other gods besides me."* (vv 1-3)

The Bible has two versions of the Ten Commandments or Decalogue ("The Ten Words") as they are sometimes called. The second version can be found in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. Both forms are longer than what we learned in the catechism. Most likely, the original form was more like the short catechism version. Why do we say that? The Ten Commandments were written on two slabs of stone, which the Israelites carried with them in the Ark of the Covenant and retained until the assault on Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Even though all of us are familiar with the Lord's "Big Ten," the following remarks may be helpful.

**First Commandment: No other god but the God of Israel.** Concerning the first commandment, Fr. John Power writes: "You shall have no other gods in my presence. This is an extraordinary command in the orient of the thirteenth century B.C., when exuberant polytheism blossomed all around. In the history of religion this command appears as something unique, a precept unknown in other moral codes. This commandment excludes any god, or any object of worship, outside God. Therefore the following sentence is really a part of that same command: 'You shall not make yourself a graven image.' That is why we include both in our first commandment. The reason for the specific mention of sculptured images is that at that time, and in the civilizations that Israel

knew, images of figures of men and animals were normally made to represent a false god, with the result that the image was ultimately adored as the image of the god in visible form. So, in such an atmosphere, the temptation to idolatry was always present and a pressing one, as Israel's later history shows. Thus verse 5 says: 'you shall not bow down to them or serve them.' This indicates that it was not the image as such that was forbidden, but the worship of it. They did have images, even in the Ark of the Covenant, and later on Moses made a serpent of bronze (Num. 21)" (Set My Exiles Free, pp 58-59).

**Second Commandment: Respect for the name of God.** This commandment forbids misuse of God's name in speech, e.g., for purposes of magic, profanity. Just as the first commandment is intended to protect the *uniqueness* of God, the second commandment is intended to protect the *sanctity* of God.

**Third Commandment: Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.** Notice that this commandment does not begin with "You shall not." The reason is that this commandment did not institute the Sabbath. It was already in existence as a *day of rest*, and was thus to be a day *dedicated to God*.

Whereas the first three commandments focus on Israel's relationship towards God, commandments 4-10 center on their relationship within the community. They are a sort of Bill of Human Rights.

The *Fourth Commandment* calls for respect for parents. The *Fifth Commandment* seeks to protect human life. Killing in battle or by capital punishment is not an issue here. Deut 20:1-14 approves of both. The *Sixth Commandment* seeks to preserve the sanctity of marriage. The *Seventh Commandment* calls for respect of people's property. The *Eighth Commandment* forbids false or perjured testimony that could ruin a person's reputation or cause a man to lose his property. The *Ninth and Tenth Commandments* prohibit illicit desires that may lead to actions already forbidden by the sixth and seventh commandments.

Moral theologian Fr. Timothy O'Connell writes that "the genius of the Ten Commandments...is the tight, clear way they sketch hard-won wisdom of life. We are not forced to spend a lifetime finding this wisdom; it is given to us on a platter. Woven together, the Ten Commandments are a great,

inspired poem, drawing lines around a way of living that can make us whole and keep us holy, a way of living that in the end is the only way we can be happy.”

Sports fields are marked with precise boundaries designating inbounds and out-of-bounds areas to guide the players. They, however, do not tell athletes how to excel at their sports.

The Ten Commandments serve a similar purpose. They name expectations or, to use a stronger word, the demands of a relationship. They clearly state what is out-of-bounds in our relationship with God and neighbor. But, like other boundaries in life, they do not necessarily tell us how to excel or be virtuous in these relationships.

**Pause:** Which of the Ten Commandments seem to be most ignored by society today?

**Verses 18-19** return to the theophany experience of 19:16-19 which put “the fear of God” into the Israelites—a fear intended to deter them from disobeying such a powerful and awesome God. Yet John Power notes: “Normally, when we think of the Ten Commandments we associate them with the word “obedience”; perhaps we should come closer to the Old Testament viewpoint if we use the word “loyalty.” God demands of them at Sinai, not so much a blind and terror stricken obedience to a decree, but rather willing loyalty to a God who has already demonstrated his love for them on the banks of the Nile, in the Sea of Reeds, and through the barren reaches of the desert. The idea of loyalty to the covenant both ensures the keeping of the Commandments and provides the motive for keeping them” (*Set My Exiles Free* p.57).

## CHAPTERS 20:22-23:30: The Book of the Covenant

“The Lord told Moses, ‘Thus shall you speak to the Israelites....’” (20:22)

The name or title *Book of the Covenant* given to this section of Exodus originates from Ex 24:7 which says: “Taking the book of the covenant, Moses read it aloud to the people....”

The Book of the Covenant is an amplification of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments state in a simple, succinct way the basic demands of a

healthy relationship with God and neighbor. However, they are silent on what the consequences might be for those who will disobey. The Book of the Covenant is a code of practical laws governing the way of life of the people of Israel in the Promised Land. The Book begins and ends with the declaration that Israel shall have no other gods in their lives.

While there are some laws regarding worship, most of the ordinances pertain to *social behavior*, such as slavery (21:1-11), personal injury (21:12-32), property damage and theft (21:33-22:5), trust and loans (22:6-14). There are laws governing relationships between men and women (22:15-23:9) and religious laws (23:10-19). The Covenant code ends with the promise of blessings that will be granted for observance of the laws (23:20-30). Slaves are to be freed in their seventh year of service since God set Israel free from the slavery of Egypt. There are repeated admonitions to treat strangers and aliens with compassion, for the Israelites, too, were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Is the principle “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” (21:23-25) justifiable? We must remember that God’s law was revealed gradually. We had to wait for Jesus to get the full revelation of God. When Jesus came, he said: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil...’*” (Mt 5:38-39).

(For more on these specific laws in Book of the Covenant, see the *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, pp 58-61).

**Pause:** Chapters 21-23 outline rules and laws to help Israel to deal with issues that developed amongst them. Which of these rules might we do well to remember today? Name two or three rules that were very important in your home when you were growing up.

## CHAPTER 24: Ratification of the Covenant

“Moses took half of the blood and put it in large bowls; the other half he splashed on the altar. Taking the book of the covenant, he read it aloud to the people, who answered, ‘All that the Lord has said, we will heed and do.’ Then he took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words of his.’” (vv 6-8)

In this chapter, Israel's new relationship with God is ratified or sealed by a blood ritual (vv 3-8) and sacrificial meal ritual (vv 1-2, 9-11)—two rituals from two different traditions.

**Verses 3-8—The blood ritual.** This ritual is inserted into the middle of the meal ritual. By means of a blood ritual, two parties bind themselves together in a solemn covenant. Moses, God's representative and Israel's leader, takes some of the blood of the slaughtered animal and throws it on the altar—which symbolizes God. Then he reads the stipulations of the book of the covenant to the people so that they know what they are committing themselves to. They respond: "*All that the Lord has said we will hear and do*" (v.7). Then Moses sprinkles on the people some of the blood saying: "*This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words of his*" (v.8). Thus the two parties to the covenant have sealed their treaty in blood, which is why this is called the blood of the covenant, or blood of the testament. Over 1200 years later, one evening in Jerusalem, Christ will hand a chalice to his Apostles with the words: "This is my blood of the new covenant." And at that moment, the Old Testament gives way to a New Covenant; what had been inaugurated at Sinai is brought to completion.

The Israelites would henceforth see the Sinai covenant as one that God made with every succeeding generation of Jews. As Deuteronomy 5:3 says: "*Not with our Lord did he make this covenant, but with us, all of us who are alive here this day.*"

**Verses 1-2, 9-11—The meal ritual.** Participating in this meal on top of the mountain are Moses, Aaron, and his sons Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders—all of whom represented the whole community. Commenting on the meal ritual, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary* states: "There is the celebration of a meal in God's presence. This very simple but profound scene is a very ancient tradition stemming from Israel's perception of God as tribal chief. By means of the meal, God takes the whole community, represented by the clan elders, into his family" (p.104)

Verse 11 says: "*Yet he did not smite these chosen Israelites. After gazing on God, they could still eat and drink.*" It was universally believed in Israel that to see the face of God meant death. It seems that this was an exception to the belief. As Catholics, we see

the meal with God as prefiguring the Mass, during which we have supper with God and renew our covenant commitment with him.

**Verses 12-18.** Moses goes up the mountain one more time, leaving Aaron in charge. For forty days and nights, he is alone with God—a precursor of Jesus' 40 days in the desert.

**Pause:** Have you ever experienced a powerful ritual ceremony, one that impacted your life in a significant way? If so, share that experience.

## CHAPTERS 25-31 and 35-40: Construction of the Ark of the Covenant

*Note: If you are following the overall narrative of Exodus, you may want to omit chapters 25-31 and 35-40, or go to Numbers 10:10 after reading Exodus 32-34.*

"*Then the Lord said to Moses: 'Tell the Israelites... that they shall make a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell in their midst. This Dwelling and all its furnishings you shall make exactly according to the pattern that I will now show to you.'*" (vv 1, 8)

Twelve of the remaining fifteen chapters of Exodus are focused on the construction of a sacred space for the Ten Commandments and some details concerning the worship life of Israel. Inserted in the middle of the twelve chapters are three chapters (32-34) that deal with Israel's apostasy (the Golden Calf incident) and the renewal of her Covenant with God.

The newly constructed sacred container for the Decalogue is called by various names: Ark of the Covenant, Meeting Place, Meeting Tent, Dwelling and Tabernacle. This sacred space becomes the primary symbol of God's presence with Israel and the place of her worship of God. During Israel's journey through the desert, this new worship space is Israel's mobile church. It can be taken down, packed up and moved to the next location. The transition from tabernacle to temple does not take place until the time of King Solomon. The Ark remained in Solomon's temple until the destruction of the Temple at the fall of Jerusalem in 586BC. It was probably destroyed at that time. The Bible does not mention it again. The Ark was constructed with great care, adorned with the most precious wood, metals and craftsmanship possible.

The extremely detailed instructions for the building of the new sacred space is an ancient way of underscoring the importance of the task at hand. Chapters 25-31 give very specific instructions for the construction of the various furnishings of the sanctuary. Chapters 35-40 describe the *execution* of the plan. Most, if not all, readers will find these chapters of Exodus rather tedious to read. A couple of points are worth noting.

- We may wonder where a nomadic people obtained all the precious items that went into the construction of the new sanctuary. Most likely, they were gifts the Israelites received from the Egyptians on their way out (12:35-36).

- For the construction of the new sanctuary, Moses, on command from God, conducts what we would call today a *Capital Campaign*. In 25:2, God instructs Moses: “*Tell the Israelites to take up a collection for me. From every man you shall accept the contribution that his heart prompts him to give me.*” God’s appeal through Moses is so successful, that Moses has to “email” his people to not bring in any more contributions. “*Let neither man nor woman make any more contributions for the sanctuary*” (36:6). Perhaps this was the first and last time a church leader instructed a congregation to stop giving money to a capital campaign!

Members of Moses’ congregation are also asked to give of their *time* and *talent* to the construction of the new sanctuary. In 36:10, Moses says: *Let every expert among you come and make all that the Lord commanded.*” It seems one man, Bezalel, can do anything. God has “*filled him with a divine spirit of skill and understanding and knowledge in every craft*” (31:3-4).

In his first letter, Peter states: “*As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace*” (1Pt 4:10). Moses could have written that line. He certainly knew how to motivate his people to practice responsible stewardship.

***God’s presence in the Dwelling (40:34-38).*** “*When Moses saw that all the work was done just as the Lord had commanded, he blessed them*” (39:43).

The book of Exodus ends with beautiful verses that speak of God’s special presence (sometimes called *shekinah*) in the newly constructed Tabernacle-Tent. “*Then the cloud covered the meeting tent, and the*

*glory of the Lord filled the Dwelling*” (40:34). This sacred space is so filled with God’s presence that not even Moses can enter while the cloud rests on it. This cloud of God’s presence becomes the Israelites’ guide when they leave Mount Sinai and continue on their journey. “*Whenever the cloud rose from the Dwelling, the Israelites would set out on their journey. But if the cloud did not lift, they would not go forward*” (40:36-37). One of the big challenges in spiritual life is learning to move with God.

**Pause:** It seems for the construction of God’s house, no expense was spared. How do you feel about parishes or dioceses sparing no expense when it comes to the construction of churches and cathedrals?

## **CHAPTERS 32-34: Israel’s apostasy and renewal of the Covenant**

Introducing this section of Exodus, lesson six of *Journey into the Bible* states:

*“The story of Adam and Eve’s sin, the original sin, is well known (see Gn 2-3). In the Bible the mystery of human disobedience is as incomprehensible as the forgiveness of God. Adam and Eve were given all that they could ever need, but they also were given a prohibition: ‘Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat’ (Gn 2:17). What is it about human nature that resists a restricted life?”*

*“The story that unfolds in Exodus 32-34 is sometimes compared with that of the Garden of Eden. God has rescued Israel from Egyptian slavery and offered them a new way of life with some prohibitions: ‘You shall not make for yourself an idol’ (Ex 20:4). But that is just what Israel does. These chapters, like the chapters of Genesis, are an anatomy of human sin, with all its irresponsibility, and the inscrutable graciousness of God.”*

### **CHAPTER 32: The Golden Calf**

This chapter can be subdivided into six scenes:

***Scene One (32:1-6).*** The people wonder if Moses is ever going to return (32:1) as he disappears for forty days. So they approach his brother Aaron and demand him for a god who will lead them as Moses had done. Amazingly, Aaron does not offer any resistance to their demand and even helps them create an idol for their worship. From their gold earrings, the people forge a molten calf, worshipping it and crying out: “*This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt*” (32:4). In speaking thus, the people

are granting to a figure fashioned out of mere objects the homage that rightfully belongs to God.

**Scene Two (32:7-14).** God informs Moses of the terrible deed committed by the people. Whatever may have been in the minds of the people when they created the golden calf, God clearly sees their action as an act of rebellion against him. And he is ready to wipe them off the face of the earth.

Then Moses, in his role of intercessor and mediator, seeks to calm God down. Moses goes through a series of arguments as to why God should not destroy his people, the clincher being his promise to Abraham to bring his descendents into the Promised Land (32:11-14). Moses' intercession on behalf of the people works as the Lord relents on the punishment he had planned to inflict on the people (32:14).

**Scene Three (32:15-20).** Moses comes down from the mountain "with the two tablets of the commandments in his hands...tablets made by God" (32:15-16). When Moses sees the golden calf, he becomes so furious that he throws down the tablets and smashes them—a symbolic way of showing that the people have broken their covenant with God. Then he destroys the calf, throws its dust into the water and makes the people drink it, perhaps as a way to impress on them the utter powerlessness of the god they have made for themselves.

**Scene Four (32:21-24).** Moses confronts his brother for his role in this terrible act of idolatry. In his evasive answer, Aaron, like Adam, tries to blame the others, saying: "*You know well enough how prone the people are to evil*" (32:22).

**Scene Five (32:25-29).** Moses stands at the gate of the camp telling the people: "*Whoever is for the Lord, let him come to me*" (32:26). Only one tribe comes forward, the Levites. Thereupon, they are ordered to go and slay "*your own kinsmen, your friends and neighbors*" (32:27). About three thousand are killed. Moses then announces that the Levites' loyalty and zeal for the Lord have won for them the blessing of ordination for the service of the Lord (32:29). Henceforth, they will be Israel's priests and in charge of the liturgy.

This is another violent event in the Old Testament that may cause us to scratch our heads. We may wonder why such a violent response—and were none of the Levites involved in the idolatrous act? Moses' strong reaction must have tipped off the people that

their breach of the first commandment is a terrible offense against God. There is no explanation as to why Aaron is not punished for his reprehensible role in abetting idol worship. This scene does give us a picture of a God who is both just and merciful. While sin is forgiven, we can also suffer from the havoc it wreaks in our lives.

**Scene Six (32:30-35).** Moses goes back up the mountain for another conversation with God. He readily admits that a great offense has been committed. But he pleads with God to forgive the people and offers himself as atonement for their sin against God. "*If you would only forgive their sin! If you would not, then strike me out of the book that you have written*" (32:32). He so cares for his rebellious people that he is willing to accept personal banishment from God's favor. God tells Moses that the instigators of the rebellion will be punished in due time. In the meantime, Moses is sent back to his job of leading, accompanied by an angel (32:34).

**Pause:** What have been or could be the 'golden calves' in your life? What people or things compete with God for your loyalty?

## CHAPTER 33: Moses' intimacy with God

God renews the promise he made to Abraham to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land (33:1-6). An angel will be their companion lest God 'loses his cool' with the stiff-necked, fickle Israelites. When the people hear of God's tough words, they go into mourning, removing all their ornaments (33:4).

We are privileged to witness close-up an encounter between God and his great servant-leader Moses (33:7-23). Their meeting takes place in a simple tent outside the main area where the people are encamped and yet close enough for them to see Moses enter it (33:8). A column of cloud, which symbolizes God's presence, hangs at the entrance to the tent, inspiring the people to worship God at their own tents (33:10).

Where it states that God and Moses are speaking face-to-face (33:11), we can take that to mean that they are having a very intimate encounter. No one can see God face-to-face and live (33:20). God's radiant light and beauty would simply be too much for a human person to behold.

God tells Moses that he will not personally travel with the Israelites but will send an angel in his place

(33:1-6). Moses uses all his charm and skill to persuade God to change his mind. God relents: “*I myself will go along, to give you rest*” (33:12-14).

Then feeling, shall we say, rather chummy in his relationship with God, Moses asks to experience God’s glory (33:18). See 33:19-23 for God’s response. It was when the “Word became flesh in Jesus” that people beheld the face of God in human form.

**Pause:** To what extent would you say you can converse with God in an intimate way? If you can, what helped you to reach that point in your relationship with God?

### CHAPTER 34: Renewal of the Covenant

Following God’s instructions, Moses cuts two stone tablets like before and brings them up to Mount Sinai where God, appearing in a cloud, pronounces what is one of the most often quoted lines from the Old Testament (sometimes referred to as “*God’s self-portrait*”):

*“The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity, continuing his kindness for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness and crime and sin; yet not declaring the guilty guiltless....”* (34:6-7)

We are reminded that while God is kind and merciful, he does not turn a blind eye to sin. He responds decisively to rebellious human actions.

In response to God’s self-revelation, Moses bows down in worship and proceeds to present to God his three requests: 1) that God travels with them, 2) that God pardons their sins, and 3) that God receives them as his own.

The last line of God’s self-pronouncement to Moses warns of the punishment of children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generations for their fathers’ wickedness. What are we to make of this seemingly unjust punishment? The reality is all too familiar today as we simply have to look at how the wounds of parents (e.g., alcoholism, drugs, divorce, domestic violence, child abuse, suicidal tendencies, etc.) are visited on their children and grandchildren.

God restates the covenant he will make with the people (34:10-26). He begins by telling Moses “he

ain’t seen nothin’ yet” for he is about to work great marvels and wonders. Then God tells him of the dangers the people will face in the Promised Land where they will be tempted to worship many gods. Finally, God recalls the Ten Commandments.

***Moses returns to the people with a holy glow (34:27-35).*** God asks Moses to write down the words of the Ten Commandments on the tablets. By doing so, Moses takes responsibility for them as a representative of the people. Then he spends another forty days and nights with the Lord in prayer and fasting. While away this time, the people remain faithful to God.

After his long stay in the Lord’s presence, Moses comes down the mountain with a holy glow (34:29). He does not notice it but his people do—so much so that they are afraid to come near him.

After returning to the valley to be with his people, Moses continues to visit with the Lord. It seems his closeness to God continues to show on Moses’ face—hence the reason for the veil. One child was heard to say: “Grandma must sleep with God because she is so happy at breakfast.”

**Pause:** Do you know of anyone who radiates God’s presence and joy? What can we do to foster this presence in our lives? What is the main message you are taking with you from this book?

### RESOURCES

- The Collegeville Bible Commentary
- The Catholic Bible – Personal Study Edition