

Parents and children do not always get along. Parents may not be happy with the choices their children make. Children may not be happy with the restrictions their parents enforce. In a typical family, people love one another, but at times they speak harsh words and perform hurtful deeds. Usually the most stressful years in any family are when the children are teenagers. At that age, kids start taking risks, and they do not tell their parents everything that is going on. Parents want children to grow up and become independent, but it is hard to know when to intervene and when to let go. After the kids have grown a little more, and especially once they start having their own children, the relationship with their parents usually improves. It takes time. From the beginning, parents and children have a covenant of love. But it takes time for that covenant to be fulfilled.

God chose Abraham to enter into a covenant and become the father of many generations. Abraham was 75 years old; Sarah was 65. They had no children. God showed Abraham all the stars in the sky, which you could see in abundance in those days. God promised that Abraham would become the father of as many offspring as there are stars. All God wanted was Abraham's faith. It sounded like a good deal to Abraham. Like so many adults, he wanted to have children. The Book of Genesis says that "Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness." But for a long time after this agreement, no child came. Today's first reading begins with the promise in chapter 15 of Genesis, and then it jumps to the fulfillment in chapter 21. This child did not come quickly. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born; Sarah was 90. A friend of mine used to say, "God is good, but God is slow."

Sometimes slow is good. Whether you are roasting beef, aging wine, learning music, or raising children, slow is good. Children and parents can benefit from this insight. Children have heard parents say, "I love you," but they sometimes think that means they can have what they want whenever they want it. Well, some things take time. The real benefits of love come not in an instant but over many years. Parents need patience with their children. The kids are growing up; they will make mistakes. Parents who have planted good seeds in their children will see them bear fruit. But it will take time.

We all grow impatient with our families, with our employment, with friendships and even in our relationship with God. How did Abram keep patience? The bible says he simply put his faith in the Lord. He believed that all would be well. God made a covenant with Abram, and God makes a covenant with us through our baptism. God has promised to be our father, and we can depend on him. Sometimes it doesn't seem that way. The dreams we had are not bearing fruit. The plans we laid have gone astray. The people in our family are not the people we had in mind. But Abram showed us the way. He put his faith in the Lord and waited. Everything turned out well. It took longer than Abram realized it would, but God was faithful to the promise. When we have doubts about God, we probably need to remember Abram. Be patient. Give it time. God is good, but God is slow.