

“Cross my heart, hope to die, stick a needle in my eye.”

This solemn childhood “vow” is first recorded - according to the Internet - in the early 1900s. It is associated with making more than a promise - rather it is associated with “swearing” to keep a secret, or keep one’s word.

In today’s first reading, we hear Abraham tell his servant:

*“Put your hand under my thigh,
and I will make you swear by the LORD,
the God of heaven and the God of earth”*

After some research online, it would seem that Abraham is saying - “cross your heart, hope to die, put your hand under my thigh.”

What in the world is this?

Some sources say that this was - for the ancients - like we would put our hand on our heart. What’s so important “down there” was that Abraham was asking his servant to make a promise to not only Abraham, but to Abraham and his descendants.

And that’s all I’m going to say about that.

But, in a more general way, “swearing” or “making an oath” is a more solemn form of a promise. In the modern age, we affix our signature to documents to promise that we will make payments on a house, or a car. Or that we will keep secrets for a corporation or a client. And the state is also involved in certain promises - like marriage and adoption.

Yet a contract is one thing. And the other is what is called a ‘covenant.’

While a “contract” effects the exchange of “goods and services,” a covenant effects the exchange of “persons.”

With that in mind, marriage and adoption are more of “covenants” than they are “contracts” ... or at least one would think so in a

contemporary civilized society. Contracts are usually about money. Covenants are usually about relationships.

Covenants have an important place in the Bible and in the Church. We take vows in marriage, in religious life, and in Holy Orders. Two of those - marriage and orders - are Sacraments.

And it might help us to understand that the Latin word *sacramentum* means “a solemn vow” or “a covenant.”

In Baptism, we are brought into relationship with the Holy Trinity - for all eternity. Confirmation configures us to “go forth” and bring others to that relationship ... to “evangelize” ... to become workers in the harvest.

Confession and Anointing of the Sick restore and repair our relationship with God and with one another.

And in the Eucharist, we receive the Person of Jesus Christ - Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

As we approach this altar to receive Him in this most Blessed Sacrament, let us renew in our hearts the *sacramentum* ... the solemn vows we have made to God. Starting with the promises of our Baptism ... Let us remember and renew the graces of our Confirmation ... As well as the promises and vows we have made in other Sacraments ... so that we might be better configured to Jesus Christ. That our relationship with Him might be so strengthened that we might be examples of His love and mercy to the world ... and bring the Good News to the world ... a world hungry for a true relationship with the Living God ... a world in need of the Truth of the Gospel ... Jesus Christ ... Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.