

**Provident Deception**    Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time    Saturday, July 6, 2019    **Gn 27:1-5, 15-29;**    Mt 9:14-17    (St. Maria Goretti, virgin and martyr)    (BVM)    (The laws and customs of a people are not always good; sometimes they have to be circumvented.)

Today we are reading from the Book of Genesis, from the **legends of Esau and Jacob**. Now on the literal level this is not believable, but it is a very interesting commentary on quite a few different topics. **Background:** first of all, in that time **the eldest male inherited the whole lot**; the entire family fortune went to one person, the eldest male, who is then responsible for everyone else. Secondly, the patriarch, **the head of the family imparted to his heir a blessing called the *Baraka***, which was conceived as almost a physical transfer of some kind of energy. And because it was seen in a sort of physical way, **it was indivisible, it could not be repeated, it could not be withdrawn, it could not be given to someone else after it had been imparted**. So that's the background.

Now in the story of Jacob and Esau they were twins. By chance Esau is the firstborn by a minute or two. But **Esau is completely irresponsible**, and his mother, **Rebecca, fears that he will become head of the clan**. This would to be very unfortunate for her. He is completely negligent of her. But **Jacob**, on the other hand, is very devout toward his mother. He is also **very responsible**, and he stays at home, whereas Esau is always out playing around. So **Rebecca** decides that she has to deceive her husband. Now this deception is hard to believe, unless Isaac were already, I would have to say, demented. But anyway that's the story. So she **deceives him by substituting Jacob for the blessing, the *Baraka***.

Now beforehand at one point Esau comes in from playing around, not having caught any game, not being interested in providing for the family, but he comes in, and there is Jacob having cooked some stew. Esau says, "Give me some." And Jacob said, "Well, what's it worth to you? How about your birthright?" And Esau says, "What do I care about my birthright. I'm hungry. I

could die any minute. Just give me some food.” **So he gives Jacob his birthright so that, in a sense, Jacob doesn’t steal anything; Esau surrenders it.** Again, this is a story.

So the various points are that **the laws and customs of a people are not always good; sometimes they have to be circumvented.** Secondly, **in a patriarchal society a woman like Rebecca, who is very clever and very resourceful, did have quite an influence.** And of course finally **Jacob does become a very industrious and provident leader of the people, and it’s because of that that they survive.** They would have never survived under Esau.