

## **Exodus 19:2-8a<sup>i</sup>**

The Israelites had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites." So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. The people all answered as one: "Everything that the LORD has spoken we will do."

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### **<sup>i</sup>About Exodus 19:2-8a**

Today's reading brings the people of Israel to their goal in the wilderness, to the place of God's self-revelation. Here God offers to humankind a response to their sin (Genesis 2-3), a call to one particular people to enter into covenant with God. God has chosen Israel (Deuteronomy 7:6) from all the world to be God's "treasured possession." God proclaims the background of the covenant: mighty acts of deliverance, especially the exodus from Egypt when God bore the people "on eagles' wings" (an image of the female eagle's care of her young).

Then God sets forth the conditions of the covenant. Israel is to obey God, especially in commandments to be set forth later. They will thus be "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation," a people set apart and consecrated for God's service. As priests were responsible to the people for both worship and teaching, so Israel is sanctified for its service to the rest of the world.