

# The Junior Observer

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An Old Testament Story

## The People of Judah Turn from God

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Catholic Courier

After the death of King Solomon of Israel, the kingdom was divided in two. The southern kingdom of Israel, which included the city of Jerusalem, became known as Judah.

Over the many years that followed, there were some good kings of Judah who kept God's covenant and statutes, but there were even more kings who were evil and rejected God. If the king of Judah followed God, so did the people. And if the king of Judah rejected God, the people did as well.

One of the kings of Judah was a young man named Zedekiah, who reigned for 11 years. He did what was evil in the sight of God, and he did not humble himself before God's prophet Jeremiah.

The king became very stubborn and hardened his heart against God rather than return to Him.

All the princes of Judah, the priests and the people turned away from God



(Illustration/Linda Jeanne Rivers)

### Bible Trivia

Who became king of Judah when he was eight years old, and pleased the Lord? (Hint: 2 Chronicles 34)

Answer: King Josiah.

as well. They began to practice all the abominations of the neighboring pagan nations, and they defiled the Temple that had been consecrated in Jerusalem.

God was compassionate toward His people and wanted them to return to Him. God would send His messengers to talk to the people and urge them to turn from their evil ways.

But the people of Judah mocked God's messengers, scoffed at His prophets and despised His words.

Finally, God had enough and became angry.

He allowed the pagan Chaldeans to attack Judah. The king of the Chaldeans led his army into Jerusalem, where young men were killed. The Chaldeans did not have compassion for anyone, not even women, the elderly or the weak.

The invaders looted all of the treasures in the Temple. They tore down the walls of Jerusalem, burned down the Temple and the palaces, and destroyed precious objects.

The people who survived the attack were brought as captives to Babylon, where they became servants to the king and his sons until the Persian kingdom came to power.

All this was to fulfill the word of God spoken by Jeremiah: "Until the land has retrieved its lost Sabbaths, during all the time it lies waste it shall have rest while 70 years are fulfilled."

## Q&A

What was the name of Israel's southern kingdom?

Who attacked the southern kingdom?

Read more about it in 2 Chronicles 36

## Vatican Gifts Delight Fifth-Grader

WESTFIELD, N.J. (OSV News)—Dominic Auricchio, a fifth-grader at Holy Trinity School in Westfield, surprised his family this past Christmas by asking for a military Bible and a rosary blessed by Pope Francis.

Dominic said that he requested the items because he enjoys learning about religion at school and because he wants to become a priest and a military chaplain when he grows up. He also dreams of meeting the pope.

On Christmas morning, he joyfully unwrapped seven religious gifts: a military Bible, a crucifix featuring the Stations of the Cross, a rosary, a miraculous medal, a vial of holy water, a chalice made of wood from the Holy Land, and an Italian prayer card. The Bible, holy water, rosary beads and crucifix came from the Vatican and were blessed by Pope Francis.

Dominic, an altar server at St. Helen's Parish in Westfield, said he "loves everything about being Catholic."



(OSV News photo/courtesy Auricchio family)

Dominic Auricchio

The Auricchios' faith has kept them strong since last January when Dominic received a serious medical diagnosis — a brain mass — detected through an MRI.

Every night, his mother prayed to the Blessed Mother. One night in May, Dominic awoke to a vision of a woman in his bedroom, who he said was the Blessed Mother, his mother said. The woman asked him to reassure his mother.

The next month, a CT scan revealed that the mass had begun to shrink on its own, without medical intervention — a development that Dominic and his family attribute to the intercession of the Blessed Mother.



(Photo provided/Sue Croke)

## Sycamore Students Gather to Prepare for Lent

SYCAMORE—St. Mary School students joined Father F. William Etheredge, parish pastor, for the burning of the palms for Ash Wednesday.