

March 8, 2009

## Second Sunday of Lent

### Reading 1

[Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18](#)

God put Abraham to the test.  
He called to him, "Abraham!"  
"Here I am!" he replied.  
Then God said:  
"Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love,  
and go to the land of Moriah.  
There you shall offer him up as a holocaust  
on a height that I will point out to you."

When they came to the place of which God had told him,  
Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it.  
Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.  
But the LORD's messenger called to him from heaven,  
"Abraham, Abraham!"  
"Here I am!" he answered.  
"Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger.  
"Do not do the least thing to him.  
I know now how devoted you are to God,  
since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son."  
As Abraham looked about,  
he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket.  
So he went and took the ram  
and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son.

Again the LORD's messenger called to Abraham from heaven and said:  
"I swear by myself, declares the LORD,  
that because you acted as you did  
in not withholding from me your beloved son,  
I will bless you abundantly  
and make your descendants as countless  
as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore;  
your descendants shall take possession  
of the gates of their enemies,  
and in your descendants all the nations of the earth  
shall find blessing—  
all this because you obeyed my command."

### Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19](#)

R. (116:9) **I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**  
I believed, even when I said,  
"I am greatly afflicted."

Precious in the eyes of the LORD  
is the death of his faithful ones.

**R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

O LORD, I am your servant;  
I am your servant, the son of your handmaid;  
you have loosed my bonds.

To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving,  
and I will call upon the name of the LORD.

**R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

My vows to the LORD I will pay  
in the presence of all his people,  
In the courts of the house of the LORD,  
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

**R. I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.**

## **Reading II**

[Rom 8:31b-34](#)

Brothers and sisters:

If God is for us, who can be against us?  
He who did not spare his own Son  
but handed him over for us all,  
how will he not also give us everything else along with him?

Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones?  
It is God who acquits us, who will condemn?  
Christ Jesus it is who died—or, rather, was raised—  
who also is at the right hand of God,  
who indeed intercedes for us.

## **Gospel**

[Mk 9:2-10](#)

Jesus took Peter, James, and John  
and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves.  
And he was transfigured before them,  
and his clothes became dazzling white,  
such as no fuller on earth could bleach them.  
Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses,  
and they were conversing with Jesus.  
Then Peter said to Jesus in reply,  
"Rabbi, it is good that we are here!  
Let us make three tents:  
one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."  
He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified.  
Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them;  
from the cloud came a voice,  
"This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."  
Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone  
but Jesus alone with them.

As they were coming down from the mountain,  
he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone,  
except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead.  
So they kept the matter to themselves,  
questioning what rising from the dead meant.

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## HOMILY

We are on a journey during this season of Lent. The destination of our journey, where we are headed, can be seen in today's readings. We are headed to the mystery of the Cross in which the Father "did not spare his own Son. We also are headed to the glory which was to be the Risen Christ's in his final triumph, glimpsed on the mountain.

The testing of Abraham in our first reading is one of the masterpieces of the Old Testament. The story echoes a brutal age in which the sacrifice of children was not uncommon – in fact, the people of the old Israel were taught to sacrifice an animal in place of their offspring in order to turn them away from this horrendous temptation.

But the real point of the story, made so wonderfully, is the absolute trust that is asked of Abraham, making him the model of all true believers. To the people of Abraham's world there was nothing more important in life than descendants who would remember and honor them. Long after the age when he could expect a child, God gave Abraham a son. If he gives up Isaac, he has nothing left but his trust in God. That trust is rewarded – those who will call him their father will be countless; all the peoples of the earth will be blessed in his name – through the salvation brought by the Cross of Christ.

This heart-rending story of the testing of a father's love is linked in today's liturgy with the basic truth of our Christian faith, proclaimed by St Paul, in the second reading. The eternal Father, who for our sake "did not spare his own Son", will not refuse anything to his people in their need.

The promise made to Abraham was to be fulfilled in the victory of the Savior's resurrection. As he undertakes the journey towards the Cross and its glorious aftermath, he gives the chosen three among his followers a glimpse of the triumph in which he would fulfill the promise of the Law (symbolized in the presence of Moses) and realize all the hopes of the prophets (symbolized in the presence of Elijah). Again the Father's love shines through: "This is my beloved Son – listen to him!"

It was a long journey from Abraham's testing to the final fulfillment of God's promise. The route our journey must take is marked out for us.

Abraham stands as a model of what it means to *listen* to God: "Here I am" he answered whenever God called. In today's gospel reading, God commands us to *listen* to the "beloved Son." Like Abraham, we do not know in advance what this listening might ask of us nor how our perception of God's will might change. Only this kind of listening to God leads us to the new life which Jesus' transfiguration foreshadows.

The gospel narrative of the transfiguration shows a light that shines from within Jesus. The truth of who Jesus is shines out: His Divinity, His love, His goodness, His compassion. For a moment or two these radiate from Him, with such power that the whole scene is transformed. This mysterious event had a profound effect on those who witnessed it. Might it also have a profound effect on us?

Today we might pray: “Lord Jesus, keep me always alert and awake to you, to your word, your action, and your daily presence in my life. Let me see your glory and respond to your promptings in my heart.”

*Henry Ormond, O.Carm.*