

2nd Sunday of Lent – 2021

Sing a Lenten Hymn

Make the Sign of the Cross+

Introduction – *Read by the leader of the family.*

The readings for the second Sunday of Lent follow the same pattern over the three years of the liturgical cycle. The first reading is always about Abraham. The Gospel is always the story of the transfiguration, this year in Mark's version.

Penitential Act

“Reflect and ask silently, in your hearts, for God's forgiveness and mercy!!!”

Today's Readings

First Reading Genesis 22:1-2. 9-13. 15-18

Abraham is the great Old Testament figure of faith. At the age of seventy-five he answered the call of God and set off for an unknown land.

Second Reading Romans 8:31-34

Paul poses questions: “With God on our side who can be against us?” “When God acquits, could anyone condemn?” The answer is “No!”

Gospel Mark 9:2-10

For the second time in the Gospels, at Jesus' transfiguration, the voice of the Father informs the disciples that Jesus is the Father's beloved Son and adds, “Listen to him.”

HOMILY FOR THE 2ND SUNDAY IN LENT - 2021

“Take your son' God said... ‘offer him as a burnt offering.’”

Even in an age when much formality from the past has been discarded, some things do not change. A good example is the list of social conventions that still operate. For example, when we meet people we have not seen before, a polite handshake has long been the norm – at least, until the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic required us to socially distance – whereas we are much less formal with family and friends. Convention is determined by many factors – age is one. Conventions dictated by formal practice are nowadays probably more regularly seen among those of an older age range,

whereas young people may be much less formal within their social settings. Convention, of course, differs from culture to culture and also from one age group to another, and the setting is also important. It is interesting to observe how people's behaviour varies according to how at ease they are – or not – with others. When we know people well, it is easy to relate to them in a relaxed manner, but when we do not have that familiarity, or if we are unsure of the possible reaction of the person we have just met, then we might be more wary.

It is in the latter situation that we find Abraham when, slowly but surely, he is getting to know the God he had not known until he was seventy-five years old. Abraham made himself a backup plan. He left *most* of his family behind, but brought along his wealthy nephew, Lot; Abraham left *much* of his wealth, but not by any means all of it. Later on, in the story, Abraham will seek clarification from God to see if the deal is still on. And then, as we heard in today's first reading, Abraham is really put to the test. In his old age, at long last he has a son who will be his heir: Isaac, whose name means "he will laugh". Abraham's dream has come true, his prayers are answered. He can rely on God – or can he?

One day, Abraham is told by God to take his son Isaac to a place where he is to sacrifice the boy as a burnt offering. Abraham is distraught but prepares to obey God. The journey is long, and its account is painful to read. Isaac starts to ask why there is no animal for the sacrifice. Abraham evades the issue by saying that God will provide the sacrifice. The tension builds up until the point that Abraham is prepared to kill his son on the stone altar. Eventually Isaac must know what his father intends to do. Then God acts. An angel stays Abraham's hand, and the boy is freed. A ram caught in a thicket is sacrificed instead.

What are we to make of the story? Did God really want Abraham to kill his son? Had Abraham misunderstood God's instructions? The Hebrew word for a burnt offering sacrifice is also the word for "ascending" – a sacrifice where the victim went up in smoke, towards God. So, is it possible that God wanted Abraham to give up his son, in other words to let him go free? Was Abraham, who waited so long for this son, so protective that, instead of Isaac being the means for God's promise to be fulfilled, he was hampered by his father's protective action? We can imagine that Isaac needed

to be freed from his father's overpowering attention if he were to carry out his part in God's plan.

We do know that in the Gospel story of the transfiguration God the Father addresses Peter, James, and John, telling them that Jesus is the Father's beloved Son, in whom God is well pleased, and that they must "Listen to him." To listen to Jesus is to develop trust in him. To listen to him and to reflect on the Gospel stories of his mission is to learn about God and to trust in God.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells Nicodemus, who comes to him from the darkness, that "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son... not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved." Through lack of knowledge of God, Abraham made understandable but wrong decisions. Lent is an excellent opportunity for us to develop a listening habit: of listening to the one who is God's Word made flesh.

Summary

1. Abraham has been called the first real human in the Bible. He is certainly the first whose emotions and doubts are recorded.
2. Abraham's developing faith is extensively portrayed.
3. Jesus, transfigured, is identified by his Father as his beloved Son; the disciples are told they must "Listen to him."

Recite the Creed

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Leader of the Family:

Having heard the Father of Jesus tell the disciples to "listen to him", we present our needs to the same Father, in the name of his beloved Son to whom we listen.

Member of the Family:

1. For the Church:
that we may be transfigured more and more
into the image and likeness of Christ.
We pray to the Lord...
2. For ourselves gathered here today
and for all members of our community:
that we may be given the grace

to hear the voice of Christ in prayer, in sacrament
and in each other.

We pray to the Lord...

3. For all who share in the sufferings of Christ;
for those who are persecuted for their faith;
for those in our community who suffer
from ailments of any kind.
We pray to the Lord...
4. For our brothers and sisters who have died,
and in particular for those who have died recently
and those whose anniversaries occur at this time:
that they may experience the eternal life
won for us by Jesus through his death and resurrection.
We pray to the Lord...

Leader of the Family:

Father almighty, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hear the
prayers we offer to you for ourselves and for all our sisters and
brothers. We ask you to grant them through Christ our Lord.

Sing a Lenten Hymn

Recite the Our Father

Make the Sign of the Cross+

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