

# Homily for the 2nd Sunday in Lent

February 24-25, 2018

Readings Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, Romans 8:31b-34, Mark 9:2-10

Preacher: Virginia Fifield

This week's first reading about the "binding up of Isaac" has always been a difficult passage for me, as I'm sure it is for others.

We are to look at it as a lesson to emphasize complete obedience to God. A lesson about our need to depend fully on God's mercy. I also know that this reading is the prayer Rosh Hashanah is based on. Jews around the world pray, asking God to forgive all their sinfulness and show them the same compassion he showed to Abraham. We are also to see it as a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Christ. All very theological and intellectual.

In 1990 this reading took on a whole new meaning for me.

It was 10 days before Christmas, a time full of joy and a time alive with promise. My granddaughter was out with her mother finishing up the last of their Christmas shopping when shots rang out. Two young men were shooting at one another to settle a minor dispute. Nadia was hit in the throat and died on the way to the hospital. This senseless act of violence changed our family forever. I asked God over and over again, "Why?" "How could this happen to an innocent 8-year-old who was so loved?"

Whenever I hear this passage now, I think about what must have been going on in Abraham's mind as he and Isaac journeyed up that mountain.

Hadn't God made a covenant with him that promised to make of him a "multitude of nations?" How would that happen if the son promised him was to be sacrificed? Hadn't he been faithful in everything God had asked of him? Hadn't God found him to be righteous? Why would God ask such a thing of him? How could he ever console Sarah? All questions that had no answers, at least for the moment.

Just before Sunday's Gospel reading of the Transfiguration, Jesus tells the disciples of his impending suffering and death. Here were people who had given

up everything to follow him because they believed he was the Messiah. He was the one who had been sent to free the oppressed and heal a broken world. So how could he die before his mission was finished? What was all of this about?

Many of us have been brought to our knees by the circumstances of life. The loss of a job, a health scare, and the loss of a loved one. Many of us have heard a doctor's diagnosis of a terminal illness for the one person who completed us—a best friend, a spouse. I am in awe of those who can weather these storms without ever questioning God. I am not that strong. These are the things that have shaken my faith to its core.

There are other circumstances that just leave us wondering, "How can this be?"

We fight injustices only to have them loom ever larger. We stand up for what we believe is right, only to be told we're on a fool's errand. We speak out against oppression only to become oppressed. We stand to defend the earth and all her resources only to be sprayed with water cannons and arrested. Woman work tirelessly to keep our Church alive only to be told we have no say in its life. I'm sure each of us has a list.

How do we continue our own journey up the mountain? How do we keep saying to God, "Here I am?" How can we wait for God to answer our longings?

As we see in both the first reading and the Gospel, God does not leave us without hope. If, like the three disciples, we linger a little while on the mountain and really see the gift of God's beloved son, we are renewed. If we embrace the light of Christ we can journey back to the everyday experiences of being. We can hold onto the promises of God and know that he is always faithful. If we journey up the mountain one step at a time we can once again say, "Here I am," and believe what Paul tells us in Romans: "If God is for us who can be against us?"