

Homily for the 2nd Sunday of Lent

March 7-8, 2020

Readings: Genesis 12: 1-4A; 2 Timothy 1: 8B-10; Matthew 17: 1-9

Preacher: Kathi Piehler

In this Sunday's Old Testament reading, we hear the Lord speaking to Abraham. The Lord calls on him to "go forth." What we don't read in this particular passage is the next sentence in the scripture: namely that Abraham is 75 years old when the Lord spoke to him!

Well, I turned 70 in December and as such, am not too far off from Abraham's age. To be honest, I have been battling with myself lately, questioning as to what is still expected of me as I reach this age—what is *my* call?

You see, I have been that "go forth" person pretty much since I was 7 years old. I was the big sister to my two much younger siblings, so I was constantly called on to do whatever was needed to help out in the family. My response was always an automatic, "Yes!" As time went on, I was the first to volunteer for anything and everything whether it was at school, or at Church or in the neighborhood—it was just ingrained in me. That continued into my adult life, as well. But of late I find I am not being much of an Abraham. I'm having a difficult time "going forth."

And why *is* that?

Am I just plain tired of that role?

Am I burned out on being good and doing what is expected of me?

Or is it that the Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (also known as the aches and pains of being a senior citizen)?

In my prayer life, each Sunday I am usually only fed by the New Testament, especially the Gospel—sometimes my mind even wanders during the first reading but not with this passage from Genesis. I was so impressed with Abraham's immediate answer to the Lord's request that he leave all he knew, where he was comfortable (and maybe even enjoying retirement) and go to an unknown land that the Lord would show him.

It got me thinking that maybe my immediate "call" is to turn up my Spiritual hearing aids, be still and simply listen a little more closely to what the Lord asks me to do—maybe it's not as difficult as I think. And wouldn't Lent be the perfect opportunity to do just that—listen a little more closely? It's only the second week of Lent; it's not too late.

For example, if we look to the Second Reading—St. Paul’s second letter to Timothy—we are reassured that we can bear our share of hardship because of the strength that comes from God. Paul tells Timothy, and all of us, that we are saved and “called to a holy life not according to our works but according to His own design and the grace bestowed on us...” And this is coming from a man who is in a cold and damp prison cell in Rome, just before his death by beheading. (I suppose I don’t have it so bad after all.) The point is that along with the Lord’s call also comes the Lord’s grace to accomplish it. He does not abandon us. We don’t have to “go it alone.” But we do have to listen.

And speaking of listening—we are all familiar with today’s Gospel, the story of the Transfiguration. God, Himself, tells Peter, James and John, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; *listen* to Him.” The disciples didn’t know why Jesus took them up to the mountain top but they certainly were not expecting the Transfiguration! They were very afraid. Aren’t we afraid of the message we receive from God, too? Very often that message takes us out of our “comfort zone”—takes us out of the familiar and calls us to be transfigured into the person He wants us to be. However, do we still listen and do we truly believe we will receive the grace that Paul speaks of to accomplish that transformation—no matter what our age or our circumstances in life?

This Lent there are many opportunities for us to prepare for our personal transfigurations—our answer to the Lord’s call—be it privately in prayer and meditation or in community at Lenten prayer services and retreats in our parishes.

Yes, Lent: A time to listen. And come Easter Sunday, with a personal renewed trust in God’s grace, a time to “go forth!”