

# Homily for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent

February 27-28, 2021

Readings: Genesis 22: 1-2, 9A, 10-13, 13-15; Romans: 8: 31b-34; Mark 9: 2-10

Preacher: Susan Howard

Life often gets in the way of faith doesn't it? It's just a fact. We drift, we succumb to all the temptations of advertising and greed and pleasure.

Through a series of short stories about tests of faith Lent offers us a way back into being truly human, in communion with and at peace with God. Tests that strengthen faith and trust in God. None of these tests is for the faint of heart. We're talking life and death. God means business!

Let's turn our focus to the test of Abraham. This was the supreme test—to sacrifice his son to the burning flames of a holocaust offering. This sacrificial offering, which is supposed to be an offering of thanksgiving is the handing over of our most beloved, our most precious thing—our heart, our future, our whole life itself. This sacrifice is mirrored in the offering that God will make of his own Son on the cross. God has entrusted to us his very life. He gave us Jesus, his son, implanted with everything he valued and loved, and gave him to us as a trust—to charge us with the responsibility of keeping that trust alive. And he believes in us!

How can we show God that we believe in him? We can listen to God and heed the stories that have been left entrusted to us in Holy Scripture. Three times he calls out to Abraham. Abraham listens and heeds. God's commands to Abraham came in a series of sacred conversations that incrementally unravel the mystery of what God was intending. Isn't that what prayer is? A series of conversations that draw us closer to God. I know you are waiting for the answer like a bolt out of the blue but that's often not how God works. And the messages aren't always easy to hear. What thoughts must have gone through Abraham's head and what trepidation in his heart at this test? Did his hand tremble, did his legs go weak? We aren't told. We only know he did what God asked without question or hesitation. He listened to God and trusted that God had something better in store for him than anything he could have ever imagined.

God calls out to us as he did to Abraham—Listen to me! Trust me! Put your very life in my hands and will I promise you great things! I will multiply your trust.

In a similar vein the disciples were shown miraculous visions to build their trust. In a scene worthy of the Imax theater, the disciples are privy to an awesome vision. Jesus is seen in the company of Elijah, representing the age of the prophets and the herald of the Messiah, and with Moses another messenger of God and the bearer of the Ten Commandments. Jesus is consumed with light and glitters and glows with a light so magnificent that the disciples are tongue-tied and beyond words. Their whole story of faith from the very beginning is right before their eyes! They tremble.

And yet again—this is not the whole story. Jesus tells them not to tell anyone what they had witnessed until after he had risen from the dead. But they could not fathom yet what rising from the dead meant. They had to come to that reality slowly and after many years of God experiences.

So this Lent we too can make a few steps closer to God. Listening and heeding. Listening to holy scripture and reading the stories of our faith fathers and mothers. We could spend more time listening to and inhaling or breathing in the call of God in nature.

You may have noticed that God talks to people in the wilderness and in high places set apart. Abraham was sent to the mountains of a far off land. Jesus and his disciples climbed a mountain off by themselves. Noah and his family were sent out to sea. Jesus and his disciples were known to go off fishing. This is where vision is cleared and new life is formed.

We know that being in nature resets our human being and opens our hearts and minds for being in tune with God.

Find your place in the wilderness, a place set apart for communing with God, on a high mountain or in your neighborhood park, and go there to intentionally listen for God.

Listen for some of the ways he is asking you to come closer to him, to trust him, to let him love you into the transfigured life with God.

