

2ND SUNDAY LENT YEAR B

Last week we encountered Jesus in the wilderness of the desert where he endured and overcame temptation. This week we encounter him in the wilderness of the mountaintop where he is transfigured. Today we also meet Abraham on the mountaintop where he endures a terrible test. In Lent the Church invites us on a similar journey, leading us away from the numbing comfort, the distracting noise, and the draining pace of modern life to lead us to the soberness, silence, and stillness of the wilderness where we face tests and encounter God.

By entering into the wilderness of Lent; by our prayer, fasting, and works of charity & mercy we draw away from the world and toward a renewed encounter with God. And we do not fully encounter God unless we first withdraw somewhat from the world and enter the wilderness.

Abraham is one of the great biblical figures; we call him “Our Father in Faith”. He shows us a trusting faith. God had called Abraham to leave the safety of his home and promised him a new land flowing with milk and honey. But not immediately! First, Abraham had to wander for many years through foreign lands amongst foreign people. But Abraham trusted in God and left the safety of his home to enter the unknown wilderness. God often asks the same thing of us: To leave our old comfortable selves behind to enter, trustingly, into God’s plans for us.

Abraham also shows us an obedient faith which we see in today’s First Reading. God had promised to make Abraham the “father of a great people, as many as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore.” But not immediately! God made him wait. It was 24 years until his wife Sarah gave birth to their son Isaac. Then, when Isaac had grown to be a boy God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son, his only son, that is, to give to God what was most precious to him in this life – his son.

Abraham, our Father in Faith, was up to the task: he was ready to obey unreservedly, holding nothing back from God. As the angel said *“You have not refused me your son, your only son.”*

God desires the same from us, that is, both a trusting faith and an obedient faith. Abraham’s experiences teach us that we can truly trust God, for He always keeps his promises, even if at first we cannot see the way. Abraham’s experiences also teach us that our own faith is and will be tested, sometimes severely tested. This is not an abrad thing. Just as our physical muscles do not develop and grow strong unless they are worked, strained and tested, so too our faith does not develop and grow strong unless it is worked and tested.

Of course, God never intended Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son, nor does he demand such a sacrifice from anyone – except himself! As Saint Paul tells us in the second reading, *“God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up to benefit us all.”* God will never ask us for as much as He himself is prepared to give.

In the Gospel today, while Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem where he would be crucified and rise from the dead he took a detour to the top of Mount Tabor with three of his Apostles. There, he showed them a glimpse of the dazzling glory that would be his after the resurrection. But not immediately! Before entering permanently into the glory of the resurrection he would first endure the cross.

Our journey through Lent, and our journey through life as trusting, obedient, faith-filled, Christians involves some real tests, some real crosses: We are called to step out of our comfort and into the wilderness, trusting in God and obeying God. God, for his part, will keep his promise and share his glory with us, like the glory of Christ in the Transfiguration.

