

Second Sunday of Lent (C) – March 16, 2025
(Genesis 15:5-12,17-18; Ps. 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 9:28b-36;)

Our first reading begins: “The Lord God took Abram outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so,” he added, “shall your descendants be.” Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited to him as an act of righteousness. Abram was still in the dark about how or when this would happen, so he asked God, “O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” As God often does for our sake he uses a method that Abram would understand. He enters into covenant with him by having him take animals to offer in sacrifice. So Abram takes them splits them in two, then it was customary to walk between them signifying that if he doesn’t keep his end of the bargain he will be split in two just as the animals are. However God doesn’t ask Abram to walk between them, rather he puts Abram in a trance at sundown and shows a flaming torch and a fire pot passing between the halves of the animals. “It was on that occasion that God made the covenant, “To your descendants I give you this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates.”

You may remember that God had made a covenant with Noah after the flood that he would never kill humankind again in punishment with a flood as he did at that time. Now he makes a covenant, not just with a man, but with the family of Abram. Eventually God will make a covenant with a nation of people – the Israelites through Moses, when he receives the Ten Commandments on a mountain, after leading them out of slavery through the waters of the Red Sea. He does that by leading the people out of Egypt called the “Exodus” from slavery.

Today in the Gospel of Luke God is again preparing to make a covenant with, not just one person, or a family or a nation but with all people who are willing. St. Luke tells us that Jesus took Peter, James and John to a high mountain. At that time you needed the witness of two or three people to guarantee that something was true. St. Luke tells that Jesus appeared in glory. His face, even his clothes, became dazzling white. In other words his divinity was shining through his humanity. This was God in

their midst. Moses, the giver of the law, from Mt. Sinai, which he received from God and Elijah, the prophet that had not died, but gone up to heaven in a flaming chariot appeared with Jesus conversing about his Exodus, which he would accomplish in Jerusalem. This is an Exodus, for us, from slavery of sin, not just for a family or a nation – a covenant for all people who choose to follow him.

For us that covenant begins with the sacrament of Baptism – a cleansing by water and the Holy Spirit from sin and anointing with the Sacred Chrism and the Holy Spirit. We become part of the covenant with Jesus and his people, saving us from slavery to sin. In Confirmation we are sealed with the full gift of the Holy Spirit so we may give witness to the Faith to others as did Peter, James and John. The bread and wine are the gifts offered in sacrifice to God. He in turn transfigures them through transubstantiation. He changes them into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, the human and Divine life of Jesus, God and Man, for us. Each time that we receive we renew our covenant with God through Jesus, the one who offered his own life as a sacrifice for us to the Father. Because Jesus is both God and man he could offer that sacrifice on the cross for us and to God's satisfaction, since he is God the Son. He is the only one who could fulfill and complete that sacrifice, offered in a covenant with God. It is renewed at every Mass and every time we receive Holy Communion.

Some of my brothers and sisters are applying for citizenship in Ireland, which we can do because our grandfather was born there. I mentioned this to another priest recently and he replied what St. Paul reminds us today, brothers and sisters, our citizenship is in heaven. St. Paul goes on to say, "from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself."

We have been given the gift of this time in Lent to offer some kind of sacrifice to God for ourselves and for the good of others. It is a time that we remind ourselves again and again that our true citizenship is in heaven – that is our true home. We offer sacrifices now as we prepare to celebrate the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus for us.