

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

March 13, 2022 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Good and gracious God, in today's readings you give Abraham, Peter, James and John a glimpse of your awesome nature. Open our minds and hearts to the Word you want us to hear and act upon as we gather together to pray and share your Word. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator reads Focus statement: In the first reading, God makes a fiery appearance to Abraham as a way to renew his covenant with him. In the Gospel, three Apostles are blessed with a glimpse of the glorified Christ. In the second reading, Paul exhorts his worldly centered readers to keep their focus on the world that is to come.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the First Reading, the Psalm and the Second Reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

This covenant-making reading opens with God promising Abram *descendants* and *land*. Considering that both Abram and Sara are nomads and beyond childbearing years, God's promise seems entirely impossible to fulfill. Nevertheless, Abram places his *trust* and *faith* in God. When Abram wonders *how* God can fulfill such outlandish promises, God responds by creating a covenant ritual. Several animals are sliced in two parts. In ancient times, the contracting parties would walk between the divided animal, understanding that if they failed to keep their piece of the contract, they would accept their fate like that of the animal. "Birds of prey swooping down on the carcasses" symbolize forces hostile to Israel.

Abram is induced into a deep sleep suitable for divine communication. But note that only God, symbolized by a "smoking fire" and a "flaming torch," walks between the divided animals. By acting thus, God is entering into a unilateral covenant of unconditional love with Abram and his descendants. Even if Abram or his descendants fail to trust, God will still continue to love them. The covenant enacted in this reading leads to the covenant at Sinai and culminates in the new and

eternal covenant which Jesus sealed in his own blood on Calvary.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 27

This psalm speaks of trust in God. Abram, against all odds, lives this call to trust God.

SECOND READING: Philippians 3:17-4:1

Paul expresses concern that his beloved Philippians might be misled by the bad example of some people in their midst who are "enemies of the Christ" and whose "god is their belly." Paul tells his readers not to imitate such people. Rather, they should imitate him who is dedicated to following the true teachings of Christ. Paul reminds the Philippians that they are pilgrims here on earth and that their true home is in heaven. Their involvement in the world must be tempered by the realization that everything here on earth is of a temporary nature, as natural disasters bring home to us so clearly.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL:

Luke 9:28-36

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

GOSPEL: Luke 9:28-36

The Transfiguration of Jesus is an epiphany story. In epiphany stories, the veil which separates the invisible world from the visible, and the future from the present, is removed temporarily and the divine is revealed. In the Transfiguration story, Peter, James and John catch a glimpse of Jesus in his glory.

In today's Gospel, Jesus goes with his inner circle to *pray*. Some scholars suggest that at this point in Jesus' ministry, he wonders if he should stay in Galilee to continue preaching the Gospel or to go to Jerusalem where he would most likely be killed. During his prayer on the mountain, Jesus has a mystical experience. God's presence is revealed to him in a very powerful way. *"While he was praying, his face changed in appearance."*

Then the two giants of Israel's religion appear: Moses (symbolizing the Law) and Elijah (symbolizing the Prophets). They *"spoke of his Exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem"* – a reference to Jesus' passage through death to new life. Jesus now knows he must go to Jerusalem even if it means death. (This is not unlike great leaders who know they must go to places that may well cost them their lives.)

Luke tells us how this story is also a "mountaintop" or awe-filled experience for Peter, James and John. They are so overcome with what is going on that Peter suggests they set up camp and never leave the place (just like how we might feel after a wonderful retreat experience). But Peter is "in over his head." He does not know what he is saying. He does not yet realize that before the glory comes the Cross.

A heavenly voice speaks: *"This is my Chosen One; listen to him."* These words are a wonderful act of affirmation of Jesus by his Father. For the Apostles,

it is a moment of great revelation. The One in their midst is truly God's Chosen One! They must *listen* to him and *follow* him. They will of course only recognize the full meaning of this awe-filled event after Jesus has passed through death into new life. This event is a glimpse of what is ahead for Jesus and his inner circle.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Share with the group or person next to you what spoke to you most in the Gospel. With this first question, try to refrain from commenting on what others said. Just share what spoke to you and then move on to the next person.
2. In the second reading, Paul says that some people "conduct themselves as enemies of the Cross" (they don't want to deal with the tough stuff of life). How easy or hard is it for you to negotiate the tough challenges of life, e.g., loss, aging, relational conflicts, etc.? What helps you to face and deal with life's tough challenges?
3. Jesus took Peter, James and John up to a mountain. Where do you like to pray? What do you like about praying alone and with others?
4. In the Gospel, Peter, James and John have a powerful, unforgettable and indescribable experience of God. Have you ever had an experience of God that transformed your life? If not, share a time when you felt especially close to God.
5. Also in the Gospel, the three apostles are told to *listen to Jesus*. How do you go about listening to Jesus?
6. What is the one thing Jesus is saying to us in this Sunday's Gospel about how a disciple should speak or act?

JOURNALING: *Having listened to God's word and listened to others reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as He asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer.
Suggestions:

Holy Spirit, help me to grow in my ability to listen to Jesus.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Name one way you can act on today's readings.
Suggestion: Say 'no' to the 'desires of the belly' by fasting one day this week.

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray? Suggestion: Pray especially for spiritual directors.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Lord, enlighten the eyes of our hearts, providing a glimpse of the glory promised us because of your saving death and Resurrection. As we move toward renewing the promise made at Baptism, make our hearts ever more confident in the Father's fidelity and the ongoing strength that comes from the Spirit.

When I Ask You to Listen

When I ask you to listen to me
and you start giving advice,
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me,
and you begin to tell me
that I shouldn't feel that way,
you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me,
and you feel that you have something
to solve my problem,
then you have failed me,
strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I ask is that you listen,
not talk, not do; just hear me.

Advice is cheap,
and I can do things for myself.
I'm not helpless,
you contribute to my fear and weakness.

But when you accept as a simple fact
that I do feel what I feel,
no matter how irrational,
then I can stop trying to convince you,
and get on with the business of understanding
what's behind my feelings.

Perhaps that's why prayer works,
sometime, for some people,
because God is quiet,
and He doesn't give advice or try to fix things.
He just listens and lets you work it out for yourself.

So please listen and just hear me.
And if you want to talk,
wait a minute for your turn,
and I'll listen to you.

Anonymous

Thursday of this week is St. Patrick's Day.

AN IRISH TOAST

May you have many friends
and may they be as mature in taste
and health and color
and sought after as the contents of this glass.
May you have warm words on cold evenings,
a full moon on a dark night,
and the road downhill all the way to your door.
May every hair on your head turn into a candle
to light your way to heaven.
And may God and his holy Mother
take the harm of the years away from you.
And...may you have no frost on your spuds,
no worms on your cabbage;
may your goat give plenty of milk,
and if you buy a donkey,
please, God, she be pregnant!

