

2ND SUNDAY OF LENT, B CYCLE, FEB 25, 2018 SUNY ALBANY

1st Reading: Gen 22:1-18 [God tests Abraham]

2nd Reading: Rom 8:31-34 [If God is for us, who can be against us]

Responsorial: Ps 116 [I will walk before the Lord]

Gospel: Mark 9, 2-10 [Jesus is transfigured]

♪ **GAZE UPON THE LORD; GAZE UPON HIS FACE.**
GAZE UPON THE ONE WHO HOLDS YOU IN HIS EMBRACE.
GAZE UPON HIS LIFE; GAZE UPON HIS LOVE;
GAZE UPON HIS COMING POOR FROM HEAV'N ABOVE. ♪

ANNA That song is a setting of the words of **St. Clare**. It's about the way **Peter, James & John** were praying in the **Gospel**. But prayer is not just about feeling good when you are with Jesus, even though that's what the disciples first thought when they saw Jesus transfigured on Mt. Tabor. You can hear it in the words & the music of **Marty Haugen's reflection** on the Gospel story of the Transfiguration.

ANNA ♪ **Disciples** **It's so nice on the mountain of Tabor,**
PETER ♪ **James** **no people in need with faces to feed,**
A & P ♪ **Peter** **when you've had it to here with your neighbor**
♪ **Disciples** **it's so good to be here with Jesus & Elijah & Moses & you guys & Jesus....**

[If you want to hear all of the song by Marty Haugen you can google "*So good to be here marty haugen*" & it will come up on Youtube. Or you can follow this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWtNiqzDzrU> The song is part of a CD entitled *Song of Mark*.]

They thought Jesus was taking them apart / to escape their everyday / pressures / ACTIVITIES / responsibilities.
But it was / to be able to go down the mountain / & / walk with Jesus to Jerusalem / to the cross
with the hope / that comes from knowing / that the RESURRECTION / WILL COME
there is NO Resurrection / without the Crucifixion / & / NO GOOD FRIDAY without EASTER
That's why / Jesus told them / not to tell anyone / what they had seen / until / he had risen from the dead.

In the midst of a long winter / & news of school shootings & abuse of women / we need to hear again
this Gospel story / of transformation / & find the hope / ... that comes from belief / in the RESURRECTION
- where Jesus overcomes for himself & all of us the horror & disgrace of his passion & death

The apostles saw **Jesus** with his face **shining like the sun** & his clothes **dazzling white**.

They heard God's voice / & they still / didn't get it.

They needed to listen more deeply / & to gaze on / the rest of the story.

PETER: We are **all** called to listen to **God** & to do what **God** says to do.

But our first impression of **God's** call is not always the end of the story.

In the **First Reading**, **Abraham** hears **God** asking him to sacrifice his son. What is **that** all about?

Is **God** asking for a human sacrifice? — What kind of a **God** do we believe in anyway?

To **TRULY** understand **this** story - which is also one of the **Easter Vigil** readings - we have to look at it
in the context of its time, from the perspective of human nature &
in relationship to the whole **Paschal Mystery**, the **Life, Death & Rising from the Dead** of **Jesus**.

Human sacrifice was common in the time this story appears. Pagan religions accepted it as normal. The message of the whole story is that the **God of Abraham** does not want him to be like his neighbors. **Isaac** is saved at the last moment to show that human sacrifice is **NOT** the way to worship the **true God**. But human sacrifice no longer happens in our world, **or** does it?

Young men & women are sent to war as a human sacrifice to nations addicted to power or prestige. Children are sacrificed to profit when a culture addicted to violence looks the other way and those who sell weapons resist having their profits go down. It seems that many in our world consider profit or the right to have whatever weapons they want to be more important than the lives of the innocent. And those who are responsible to protect people from being killed or injured by violence seem afraid to do anything to change this pattern.

The need for a scapegoat seems to be the origin of the practice of human sacrifice in ancient times, You can see it today in a lot of political posturing where people ignore the issues & spend most of their energy on blaming someone else *because* a problem exists rather than looking for a way to solve it. And it's all too common to try to solve the problem of violence by violent means,
& only causing a deepening of the cycle of violence.

The **Gospel story** & the song which puts it to music, hints that Jesus will become a victim of violence. His love for the outcast, his preference for people over rules & his claim to be above the Roman Empire make him vulnerable to the powerful of his time, both the Roman occupiers and his own Jewish leaders. But they could not have the last word. He does indeed suffer death, but he rises again on Easter.

The ancient church saw the ram which **Abraham** sacrificed as a symbol of Jesus who gave his life to show the depth of his love, & the love of his Father. This is the meaning of the story of **Abraham** through the lens of the **Gospel**.

Along with this **Gospel**, today's first reading from **Genesis**, points to a God who is **LOVE** & rejects a God who commands us to kill. They point to the truth that's in today's **Second Reading** from **St. Paul**:

"If God is for us, who can be against us? If God did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will God not give us everything else along with him?"

ANNA *Near the end of the song about the **Transfiguration** that we began with, you can the **difference** in the music as **Jesus** talks to his disciples says*

[spoken] When you must face tomorrow, / with all its pain & sorrow,
my love shall burn within you / so your hearts will know the way.

ANNA & PETER 🎵 From the peace of the mountain / to the trials down below,
you are called now to labor, / be the seeds God will sow,
bring new hope, bring true healing to that world of woe
walk on, / walk on into the valley; walk on, / walk on into the valley. 🎵



During Lent, /we are **all** invited / by Jesus up the **Mountain** / to spend time with Him,
to **gaze upon His Face**, / **to listen to** and **respond** / to God's voice,
and to **be transformed** / by that experience / so we can
go back to the **valley of our everyday** / assured of the **presence** and **power of Jesus**.

We are invited / to '**gaze upon the Lord**' as we read the stories / of **love & faith** in the Bible,
maybe some of the readings / that occur during the Lenten liturgies.

We are invited to fast / - perhaps from food or technology
perhaps even / from our regular schedules,
PETER certainly from nasty 'tweets' & nasty 'facebook posts',

We are invited to pray by **taking time** with God / & finding opportunities to **pray** with each other in
whatever way we can, even if / it's a few moments of **silence** / with a friend as we **experience beauty**.

We are invited to '**gaze upon the Lord**' / in the faces of our brothers & sisters - and
to give the alms / of **our time** & **presence** to each other
as well as / **sharing whatever** we can / with those in need.

We are invited to make **Jesus & his teaching** the center of our lives:

♪ **O Lord, you are the center of my life;**
I will always praise you, I will always serve you,
I will always keep you in my sight. ♪ [Gather #598]

