

## 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT, B CYCLE, MARCH 1, 2015

First Reading: Genesis 22:1-18 [God tests Abraham]

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 116 [I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living]

Second Reading: Romans 8:31-34 [If God is for us, who can be against us]

Gospel: Mark 9, 2-10 [Jesus is transfigured, and the voice of God says, "This is my beloved son."]

♪ **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 is about the way Peter, James & John were praying in today's Gospel. But prayer is not just about feeling good when you are with Jesus -that's what the disciples first thought - you can hear it in Marty Haugen's musical reflection on this gospel story

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♪ It's so nice on the mountain of Tabor,

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♪ **no people in need with faces to feed,**

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♪ **when you've had it to here with your neighbor**

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♪ it's so good to be here with Jesus -- & Moses -- & Elijah -- & you guys.

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*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 and 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 and news of war and corruption we need to hear this Gospel story of transformation again and find the hope that comes from belief in the Resurrection-where Jesus overcomes for himself and all of us the horror and disgrace of his passion and death**

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

*They heard God's voice and they still didn't get it. They needed to listen more deeply and to gaze on the rest of the story.*

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**PETER:** We are all called to listen to God and 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? To understand this story - which is also one of the readings for the Easter Vigil - we have to look at it in the context of its time, from the perspective of human nature and in relationship to the whole Paschal Mystery, the life, death and rising of Jesus from the dead.

Human sacrifice was common in the time this story appears. Pagan religions accepted it as normal. If you listen to the whole story, you can see the God of Abraham demonstrating that Abraham was **not** 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. And human sacrifice no longer happens in our world, or does it? Suicide bombers are still sacrificed to a cause, and all too often prophets are assassinated when they threaten the status quo.

The need for a scapegoat seems to be the origin of the practice of human sacrifice in ancient times, and the reason some people are falsely accused or blamed to this day.

Humans always seem to want to find a scapegoat, someone to blame. You can see it in many episodes of the several incarnations of Law & Order and other TV shows.

The usual suspects are the first to be blamed, and everyone is upset when they can't find someone to pin the murder on. You can see it in a lot of political posturing where people ignore the issues and spend most of their energy on blaming someone else *because* a problem exists rather than looking for a way to solve it. That seems to be what is going on in the discussions about immigration in our country today.

The Gospel story, and the song which puts it to music, hints that Jesus will have to die before he rises from the dead. 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 and to save us from our sins. This is the meaning of the story of Abraham through the lens of the Gospel. It is a parable that points to the truth that St. Paul sings about in today's 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, "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?"

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**ANNA:** *Further on in Marty Haugen's song about the Transfiguration, Jesus tells the disciples*

When you must face tomorrow, / with all its pain and 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.** 🎵

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 and faith in the Bible,  
perhaps the readings that occur during the Lenten liturgies.

**PETER** We are invited to fast - perhaps from food or technology or TV,  
perhaps even from our regular schedules by taking time with God,  
and finding opportunities to pray with each other daily or at Services of Reconciliation.

We are invited to 'gaze upon the Lord' in the faces of our brothers & sisters, especially the members  
of our own families and, for Sr. Anna and I, the members of our own religious families  
- 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 and 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.** 🎵