



Second Sunday of Lent † Sunday 25th February 2018

In England and Wales

Cycle of Prayer – Candidates for the Sacraments

Keynote: Called to walk in faith in the presence of God

Book of Genesis 22: 1-2, 9-13, 15-18

Here we offered a family oral tradition about Abraham – the man of faith – whose example of loyalty, leadership and obedience of faith is held up for us to imitate. So we read: *‘God put Abraham to the test: “Abraham, Abraham” God called. “Here I am” Abraham replies. “Take your son,” God says, “your only child Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a burnt offering, on a mountain I will point out to you.’* Imagine Abraham’s feelings for his son – the joy of his life – now to be put to death on the mountain. The challenge: to do the will of God, or to save the life of one’s own child – tested – Abraham’s faith is not found wanting. *“Do not raise your hand against the boy,” God’s messenger says, “Do not harm him for now I know you fear God. You have not refused me your son, your only son.”* Many aspects of this narrative may help us to deepen our faith this Lent. That ‘fear of God’ is about a deep reverence, about respect and awe for the presence of God, rather than about being afraid. Abraham’s actions are about priorities in relationships, and ultimately may point us to the deeper mystery of God and his only Son in death for our ultimate freedom on another mountain place. Yes! Abraham our father in faith might teach us a thing or two!

Responsorial Psalm 115 (116) – In gratitude to God, a prayer of promise

Letter of Paul to the Romans 8: 31-34

If you thought that in the first reading Abraham might have gone weak at the knees at the thought of having to kill his own child, here Paul offers a remedy for those facing trial or tribulation. *‘With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that God will not refuse anything he can give.’* There is a confident assurance in this text that confirms us in time of weakness, or a time of unbelief or uncertainty. *‘Christ Jesus not only died for us – he rose from the dead, and there at God’s right hand he stands and pleads for us.’* What need we fear when we walk in the presence of God?

Gospel according to Mark 9: 2–10

Somehow this event makes the coming horror of Jesus’ passion and death almost bearable for Jesus’ true identity is revealed today. *‘Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone by themselves. There, in their presence he was transfigured... “It is wonderful for us to be here!”* cries Peter. There is a sense of awe, of wonder – even fear of God on this mountainside. But at the same time for these privileged disciples there is a sense of intimacy with God. *‘They were so frightened – a cloud came covering them in shadow, and there came a voice from the cloud: “This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.” ‘Then suddenly’, the evangelist tells us, ‘when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more but only Jesus.’* We are brought back to the hard rock of the mountain and like the three disciples we look to Jesus and continue with him on the journey of faith. With the apostle Peter we can say: *‘It is wonderful for us to be here!’*

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