



# LIVING THE GOSPEL



**Second Sunday of Lent  
February 25, 2024**

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**Theme: "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."**

## **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** O God, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: Mark 9:2-10**

<sup>2</sup> And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup> and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. <sup>5</sup> And Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> For he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid. <sup>7</sup> And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." <sup>8</sup> And suddenly looking around they no longer saw any one with them but Jesus only.

<sup>9</sup> And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of man should have risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant.

### **Gospel Focus**

Like last week, this tells the account of one of the Rosary's Luminous Mysteries. The Transfiguration is a mysterious episode. It seems hard to describe-Jesus' clothes became white, but whiter than you're thinking, Mark seems to say. The whiteness is bright enough to dazzle; there seems to be some kind of light here. There is also darkness; a cloud comes and casts a shadow over the disciples on the mountain. Not much is clear about what this is or what it means. But one thing is clear: the voice from the cloud that says "This is my beloved Son, Listen to Him." Following Christ does not always make life easy or clarify our decisions, but when we rest in what the disciples heard on that mountain, we can be assured that it is the right thing to do.

### **Gospel Reflection**

What kind of parents would meekly comply with an order to kill their only child? What kind of God would ask such thing? Disturbing questions arise from today's first reading, which opens: "God put Abraham to the test." The narrative that follow sounds a lot like what Scripture scholars have come to call a "call story." God calls Abraham by name and Abraham twice responds with the same words Samuel used in his own call story (1 Samuel 3) and that Isaiah did in his: "Here I am."

Call stories emphasizes the eager willingness of a person to respond to God, as well as the great sacrifices they are asked to make for the sake of the mission that God offers them. Genesis 12, prior to this passage recounts the call of Abraham and his willingness even at the age of seventy-five, to leave his home in Haran to journey to the unknown. Abraham has shown himself responsive to all that God asks; he has committed himself fully to God in a covenant (Gen 15:1-21). Unsettling questions arise as we ponder why God would now demand that Abraham sacrifice his precious son, as act that would seem to make impossible the fulfillment of God's promise of numerous descendants.

Might it be that the biblical writer is relating how Abraham continued to experience trials and tribulations, even as he tried his best to follow God's call? Having the mindset that whatever happens is God's doing, the writer attributes the "testing" of Abraham is God's intent. Did Abraham find, as we do, that even when we try to be most faithful, tragic things, still happens? Or does this story in fact recall a time when Isaac's life as in jeopardy and Abraham felt responsible, and helpless to protect him? What parent has not had that frightening experiences? Parents also know that loving their children demands that they be willing to let them go. All love relationships flourish only when there is freedom to let go of what is precious, so as to receive it back as a gift. Even if Abraham has lost Isaac, that would not have nullified God's covenant of love.

The story of Abraham and Isaac invites us to reflect on times when, even though we try to be faithful, we do not correctly hear what God is saying. In rabbinic tradition, some sages have interpreted this text not as test of Abraham but of his misunderstanding. The author of one of the earliest midrashic works, called Genesis Rabbah, puts this startling words into God's mouth as he speaks to Abraham: "What, do you think I meant for you to slay him? No! I said only to take him up... and now I say take him down." Perhaps an important lesson to be drawn here, then, is that practices of communal discernment offer an alternative model to that of relying on the decisions of one person who might understand what God has said. Often God speaks through a community of believers more clearly than through a single individual.

## **Old/New Testament and CCC links**

### **First Reading — Genesis 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18**

<sup>1</sup> After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." <sup>2</sup> He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." ...

<sup>9</sup> When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. <sup>10</sup> Then Abraham put forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

<sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." <sup>12</sup> He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to

him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." <sup>13</sup> And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ...

<sup>15</sup> And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, <sup>16</sup> and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies, <sup>18</sup> and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

### **Responsorial Psalm — Ps 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-1**

***R: I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.***

I believed, even when I said, "I am greatly afflicted." Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones. **(R)**

O Lord, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your handmaid; you have loosed my bonds. To you will I offer sacrifice of thanksgiving, and I will call upon the name of the Lord. **(R)**

My vows to the Lord I will pay in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem. **(R)**

### **Second Reading — Romans 8:31-34**

<sup>31</sup> What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? <sup>33</sup> Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; <sup>34</sup> who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?

### **Catechism of The Catholic Church**

**151.** For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his "beloved Son", in whom the Father is "well pleased"; God tells us to listen to him.(Mk 1:11; cf. 9:7) The Lord himself said to his disciples: "Believe in God, believe also in me."(Jn 14:1) We can believe in Jesus Christ because he is himself God, the Word made flesh: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known."(Jn 1:18) Because he "has seen the Father", Jesus Christ is the only one who knows him and can reveal him.(Jn 6:46; cf. Mt 11:27)

**459.** The Word became flesh *to be our model of holiness*: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."<sup>74</sup> On the mountain of the Transfiguration, the Father commands: "Listen to him!"(Mk 9:7; cf. Dt 6:4-5) Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: "Love one another as I have loved you."(Jn 15:12) This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example.(Cf. Mk 8:34)

**516.** Christ's whole earthly life - his words and deeds, his silences and sufferings, indeed his manner of being and speaking - is *Revelation* of the Father. Jesus can say: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father", and the Father can say: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"(Jn 14:9; Lk 9:35; cf. Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7, "my beloved Son")

Because our Lord became man in order to do his Father's will, even the least characteristics of his mysteries manifest "God's love. . . among us".(Jn 4:9)

**552.** Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve;(Cf Mk 3:16; 9:2; Lk 24:34; I Cor 15:5) Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through a revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Our Lord then declared to him: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."(Mt 16:18) Christ, the "living Stone",(I Pt 2:4) thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it.(Cf. Lk 22:32)

**649.** As for the Son, he effects his own Resurrection by virtue of his divine power. Jesus announces that the Son of man will have to suffer much, die, and then rise.(Cf. Mk 8:31; 9:9-31; 10:34) Elsewhere he affirms explicitly: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."(Jn 10:17-18) "We believe that Jesus died and rose again."(I Th 4:14)

### **Sharing and Discussion**

1. Where and how do you see God in your life? This could be an extraordinary moment of revelation or a series of ordinary occurrences; God is present in both.
2. Where is it that you find it hard to see God? Could this be an invitation to seek God in other ways or places?
3. Where have you encountered God in a way that makes you want to linger in His presence

### **Closing Prayer**

**All:** Strengthen us, gracious God, in our practices of prayer, fasting and alms giving this Lent. Help us to be attentive to the needs of our neighbors and the world, so that all may come to know your beloved Son. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen