

Homily  
March 5, 2023  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent  
18:55 – 28:51

The season of Lent this year, Cycle A, there is a thread that goes through all five Sundays. Last week we heard from Genesis, Chapter 2. The great story of God's original blessing being lost. A lie of Satan, which tried to make out God as the liar: *Surely you will not die. You will become like gods*, began the trajectory.

And then the temptation of Jesus. The lies of Satan rebuked with God's word, bring that trajectory almost to its fulfillment.

This week we begin with Genesis. And now we are in Chapter 12. But before we get there, a little back story. It's in the preceding chapter, Chapter 11. See, Abram didn't just pop up in Chapter 12. There's a subtle introduction that takes place in Chapter 11. Terah, the father of Abraham, leaves the city of Ur of the Chaldeans, taking Abram, Lot and everything he has – family and property – and begins a journey to Canaan. We don't know what prompted the journey. We just know he began it. But the journey was interrupted. They reached the city of Haran, northeast of Ur of the Chaldeans, and stopped and settled there.

And then in Chapter 12, God calls Abram. It is the beginning, of Abram's relationship with God and God's with Abram. Note from our reading that it is all God's initiative. There are five times in the reading that we hear the word, "I," and five times we hear the word, "bless," or "blessing." The "I," is that of God. The "**blessing or blessed**," is the gift from God. Blessings flow from God, even to the point where Abram is to be known as blessing.

God invites Abram to continue what his father, Terah, originally began – the journey to Canaan, where Abram will become the source of a great people. Now, this invitation to journey is also the invitation to relationship with God because God promises to be with him on this journey.

Abram listens. He takes up the journey and he places his faith in this new relationship with God, He leaves behind the pagan city of Haran, a city of many gods, to journey with the one God. The journey is to be to a home, but that is all Abram knows. His "yes," is rooted in his faith in God's promises, his blessing. There is much that is not known. And yet, he goes.

Brothers and sisters, we of an Abrahamic faith, like our Jewish ancestors and our Muslim brothers and sisters, this is the **beginning of salvation history**. This is the cornerstone. (Holding out his hand in one direction) God's initiative and invitation – (holding out his other hand in the other direction) someone's response to that invitation to journey with God.

Now our Second Sunday of Lent always relates the Transfiguration narrative. This being Year A, it comes from Matthew's account. Abram's story, though, is strongly connected to this transfigured moment. Jesus, as Matthew has related earlier, is the fulfillment of God's initiative.

Jesus takes his friends Peter, James and John to the mountain – that is “to the meeting place” with God. And Moses and Elijah, as we know – representing the Law and the Prophets – appear with Jesus in conversation. Now they, like Abram, had an invitation from God and they had a response to that initiative. He called them first in fiery bush and in whispering sound in a cave. And in faith with God, they altered their life-paths.

Jesus has brought his friends to understand the truth of the depth of God's initiative. Revealed as companion of Moses and Elijah, himself having responded to the initiative of the Father, he is on a journey. He has already declared what that journey is. With the Father, in all things, to death and resurrection. How it unfolds is not completely known. Even for Jesus. And part of it remains mystery (very much so) to the disciples.

The Transfiguration reveals that the journey, though it will include the Cross, will end in the fulfillment of Jesus' glory and the transfiguration of all believers.

Recall your baptismal candle: Light. Recall your baptismal garment: White. We are transfigured through the gift and the blessing of our baptism. It is the reflection of our Gospel this day.

Now going down the mountain, the disciples are still dazed. They've overcome their fear, but Jesus tells them, because they are dazed and they don't understand, to hold this moment in silence in their hearts until the Son of Man rises from the dead.

This mountain moment strengthens their weak faith to help them continue on the journey with Jesus to the fulfillment.

My brothers and sisters, I believe that our readings invite us to spend reflective time this week. God has taken the initiative in our lives in our creation, in our redemption and our sanctification. All of our sacramental moments reveal that. And he, in those moments and even through daily life, invites us

to respond in faith just like those who have gone before us. His promise is that he will journey with us in Christ and in the Spirit, even as our unknown lives -- the next time, the next moment, the next year -- unfold before us. Some of those moments challenge us. Some of them leave us dazed and wondering. Still other moments bring change to our lives in a small transfiguration, if you will.

God has acted first. He has loved us first. He has offered his presence in our life first.

How are we responding in our Lenten Journey, indeed in our life's journey? We might consider during our reflective moments to go back and reread the Second Reading from today. It points us toward celebrating the blessings we have been given and the promise that God has made to us in those blessings.

May our week allow us to wrap our arms in joy around God's promises and initiatives -- and encourage a stronger response.