

Second Sunday of Lent – February 28, 2010 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

The Lord God took Abram outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be." Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. He then said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as a possession." "O Lord GOD," he asked, "how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He answered him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." Abram brought him all these, split them in two, and placed each half opposite the other; but the birds he did not cut up. Birds of prey swooped down on the carcasses, but Abram stayed with them. As the sun was about to set, a trance fell upon Abram, and a deep, terrifying darkness enveloped him. When the sun had set and it was dark, there appeared a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, which passed between those pieces. It was on that occasion that the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates."

Psalm: Ps 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14

R. (1a) The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid?

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Hear, O LORD, the sound of my call;
have pity on me, and answer me.
Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks.

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Your presence, O LORD, I seek.
Hide not your face from me;
do not in anger repel your servant.
You are my helper: cast me not off.

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD
in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD with courage;
be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.

R. The Lord is my light and my salvation.

Scripture Reading: Philippians 3:17-4:1

Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us. For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their "shame." Their minds are occupied with earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord.

Gospel: Luke 9:28b-36

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But he did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.



Readings and excerpts from the *Lectionary for Mass* ©1970, 1997, 1998 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., ©1997, 1981, 1968 International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc., and ©1964 National Catholic Welfare Conference, Inc. Excerpts from the *Sacramentary* ©1969–1985 ICEL. Excerpts from *Living Liturgy* ©2001 The Order of St. Benedict, Inc. Clip art ©1994, 1996 The Order of St. Benedict, Inc. All rights reserved.

Second Sunday of Lent – February 28, 2010 – Good Shepherd Parish

INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

The readings this Sunday will highlight God's covenant with human beings, offered not once but often, and hardly ever heeded. The great covenant-offer fits into just eleven words. "I will be your God and you will be my people." God promises to love us greatly and in return we promise to love God above all things. Even our first parents and God had this relationship in the Garden of Eden, but God watched with anguish as their free will, the gift he had given them, suddenly rejected his love. The [First Reading](#) shows him toiling to re-establish the covenant much later in history, after many such refusals. He singles out a paltry old nomadic man named Abram and says to him, "Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be." An impossible promise. What is Abram's reaction?

Abram put his faith in the Lord. God credited it to him as an act of righteousness. This last word, righteousness, means something like "holiness," or, "to be the person you ought to be when you are with God." God is crediting Abram with fulfilling the covenant: receiving the offered love ("I will be your God") and in return putting his faith in the Lord ("and you will be my people"). He was signing the agreement, so to speak. Then an ancient sacrificial cult took place. As the sun was about to set, a trance fell upon Abram. A deep, terrifying darkness enveloped him. Fire appeared among animals that Abram had slain. God spoke, promising a homeland, the "promised land," to Abram and his descendants. This symbolized God's half of the covenant. The other half was up to Abram and his wife Sara. After a very long time they had a son in their extreme old age ([Genesis 18: 10ff](#)), and the son's descendants ran in and out of the covenant. As time went by the agreement was forgotten and ignored.

So, when the time was right, God thought up a brilliant solution. Instead of speaking from on high, or through prophets, he would himself take shape on earth as Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ. In the first place, Jesus was the very love God had offered for so many centuries. But he was also the people's loving response, since he was completely a human being. As a human he could say to the Father with complete fidelity, "You are our God, and we are your people, unto death." As God he could completely accept and trust the covenant. Think of it. As the God/man Jesus was able to fulfill both halves of the covenant. There is another covenant ceremony in [Sunday's Gospel](#). It has a lot in common with the one Abram had gone through. Jesus is transfigured, his clothes dazzling as fire—a counterpart to the fire in the First Reading. Just as with Abram, terrifying darkness closes in. Within the darkness, God's voice repeats the covenant. "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." These words are addressed to us as well. The covenant is finally fulfilled, but we have to opt into it. We have let ourselves be joined to Jesus in his fidelity to God. In Baptism we begin this. We continue it in each Mass we attend, each communion we receive. We say "Amen" to it. Try it this Sunday.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Abraham was faced with great uncertainties later. Do you think remembering these promises helped? What helps you face uncertainties when you need to make decisions? Is God with you?
2. Paul is urging the Philippians to keep their priorities straight. Do you find that an easy task? "Their minds are occupied with earthly things." Would you fit right in with the Philippians in this? Discuss. Who or what helps you with the struggle of shoveling out the *earthly things* from your mind?
3. Jesus told the disciples about the upcoming events and they didn't accept the news well. How were the words, "This is my Son. Listen to him," a stamp of approval from the Father on all that was about to take place? What does the transfiguration mean to you?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following: God our Father, help us to hear your Son. Enlighten us with your word, that we may find the way to your glory. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen