**THE SECOND SUNDAY of LENT**

*Last week there was a strong image in our Old Testament lesson, the rainbow, God’s sign and seal of His promise to Noah about mankind; a reminder that He promises to continue to love the world He created. That image helps turns the dark approach to Lent upside-down. Far from 40 days living out a purely negative time of denial, it becomes a creative time in which we grow in our understanding of God’s love for us and how He wants to help us become the very best we can be, His rainbow people ~ all of us different with our own special skills and contribution to make. Prayer and worship helps us in this process.*

*This week’s readings show us something more of that love relationship between God and His people developing. The two characters: Abraham, or Abram as he starts out, and Peter, or Simon as he starts out, are both heroes of faith … but, they are far from plaster saints. The thing they have most in common is that they both react honestly to God’s approaches! And in tur, He delights in them and deals with them as they are, with all their human-ness. This is the starting point for us in prayer: to come before God, simply, in all our raw humanity.*

**HYMN: The God of Abram praise**  [**https://youtu.be/OvTgzJ2nZGo**](https://youtu.be/OvTgzJ2nZGo)

You Father are Abram’s God and ours! Your love bears us up on eagles’ wings!

And your faithfulness holds us through to eternity

**We praise you Father for Your amazing LOVE**

**PRAYER**

Let us pray that we may be given grace to keep Lent faithfully.

 **Heavenly Father, all hearts are open to you.**

 **No secrets are hidden from you.**

 **Purify us with the fire of your Holy Spirit**

 **that we may love and worship you faithfully,**

 **through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**.

**TIME of CONFESSION**

Heavenly Father, long~suffering and of great goodness,

I confess to You, I confess to You with my whole heart

My neglect and forgetfulness of Your commands,

My wrong~doing, thinking and speaking,,

The hurts I have done to others,

And the good I have left undone.

O Lord, forgive me, cleanse my heart,

and raise me to new Life with You

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Old Testament Reading**

*From* The Book of Genesis Chapter 17

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said:

*"I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.*

*I will confirm my covenant between me and you*

*and will greatly increase your numbers."*

Abram fell face down, and God said to him:

*"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.*

*No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham,*

*for I have made you a father of many nations.*

*I will make you very fruitful;*

*I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.*

*I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you*

*and your descendants after you for the generations to come,*

*to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.*

*The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give*

*as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you;*

*and I will be their God."*

Then God said to Abraham: *"As for you, you must keep my covenant,*

*you and your descendants after you for the generations to come.*

God also said to Abraham:

*“As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.*

*I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her.*

*I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations;*

*kings of peoples will come from her."*

Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself:

*"Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old?*

*And will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"*

**Collect for Ash Wednesday**

 Almighty and everlasting God,

 you hate nothing that you have made

 and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:

 create and make in us new and contrite hearts

 that we, worthily lamenting our sins

 and acknowledging our wretchedness,

 may receive from you, the God of all mercy,

 perfect remission and forgiveness;

 through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

**TIME to REFLECT**

*Abram is given a great gift. God tells him His name and shows him who He is:*

*“I am God Almighty”.*

*Then in the following conversation He shows Abram that He has listened to his heart, He knows him and understands his pain ~ the fact that he had no land or children of his own; and He promises to give him all he is hoping for and more. To seal the deal God gives him a new name: Abraham, and also one for his wife, who becomes Sarah. A special gift, a new identity as His chosen ones. All He asks is that they “walk before me and be blameless“. It is in our own prayer and worship, alone and together, as we begin to recognize God revealing Himself to us and find ourselves able to trust Him that we too can begin to make the first steps of faith that lead us to saying in our day: “Yes God, I too want to walk with You and live in a way that pleases You.”*

*This agreed, God promises Abraham the universe, spelling out that the first step of showing He is as good as His word will be the birth of a child to him and Sarah. At the age of 100, not surprisingly, he laughs at the idea; and, working from his human perspective, tries to explain the possibility of God’s miracle away! It is only as we grow in prayer and worship that we will learn to discern the difference and learn to trust God’s way as distinct from our own human perspective ~ and learn when it may be right sometimes to offer things to Him in prayer that have a ring of impossibility, but which may well prove to be part of our calling yet, in the light of reality, of all that is realistic or common~ sensical, involve taking a giant step of faith.*

**A COLLECT for LENT 2**

Unseen God, whose Name is not ours to claim and own;

We come to You with empty hands and fragile foundations;

Free us from the desire to judge who and what is Yours and who is not

That we might live in freedom,

Rooted and grounded in Your all embracing Love alone,

Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**Pause for Thought**

***Take*** *time to reflect on your life at the moment. The Father knew Abram, his thoughts, his hopes and fears, his aspirations and his disappointments. And God accepts him and Sarai as they are with their human traits and silliness. He knows us intimately too: our minds, our hearts, our motivations, our weaknesses and temptations as well as our strengths and gifts. He loves us just as we are. As you sit quietly, review the things you are proud of and the things that you may be ashamed of or keep hidden. Open your heart to His gaze and receive His love. Remind yourself that He accepts you as you are and longs to work with you.* ***And*** *when you find yourself judging others, remember that He loves and accepts them too. None of us will ever be perfect but in Lent our challenge is to look to the One who sets us the best of examples to follow, the One who has many names and who has invested in our souls.*

**SONG:** Jesus, Name above all names **https://youtu.be/91zyiXUCAg4**

**The Gospel Reading** **:** Mark Chapter 8 verses 33-38

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter.

*"Get behind me, Satan!"* he said.

*"You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."*

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said:

*"If anyone would come after me,*

*he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*

*For whoever wants to save his life will lose it,*

*but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.*

*What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?*

*Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?*

*If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him*

*when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."*

**REFLECT**

*Peter reacts from his heart. He too has been given a new name by Jesus and has become one of His right hand men. In the conversation just before today’s scene, Peter has just been applauded by Jesus for telling Him that he believes He is the Messiah. But when Jesus begins to explain what lies ahead ~ the degrading, painful way of suffering and bloody death on a cross ~ Peter tries to persuade Him to work things out an easier way! It is this that provokes such a damning rebuke from Jesus “Get behind me, Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men!” and then goes on to tell the crowd of the challenge they will face if they choose to follow Him. Peter shies away from Jesus’ description as He spells out the cost. It’s a lesson the headstrong Peter has to learn ~ and this is one of his opportunities! Both Abram and Peter needed a new perspective, to see things from God’s point of view. The battle ahead is a battle for the soul ~ the sacred place that is at the core of our identity ~ which the world can smother, divert, deaden or annihilate; but, nurtured and directed by a loving God, can flourish.*

**PRAYERS**

*(Please use one of the past weeks outlines to help with your Intercessions)*

Eternal God, the light of the minds that know you,

 the joy of the hearts that love you,

 and the strength of the wills that serve you:

 Grant us so to know you that we may truly love you,

 and so to love you that we may fully serve you,

 whose service is perfect freedom

 in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

**HYMN:** Take up thy cross, the Saviour said **https://youtu.be/OS3q4uTEAik**