

FIRST READING – A LENT 2

A reading from the book of Genesis.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

The Lord said to Abram,
“Go from your country and your family and your father’s house
to the land that I will show you.
I will make of you a great nation,
and I will bless you, and make your name great,
so that you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and the one who curses you I will curse;
and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.

Pause for THREE seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – A LENT 2

A reading from the second letter of Saint Paul to Timothy.

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Brothers and sisters:

Join with me in suffering for the Gospel,
relying on the power of God,
who saved us and called us with a holy calling,
not according to our works
but according to his own purpose and grace.
This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus
before the ages began,
but it has now been revealed
through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus,
who abolished death
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While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”



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The gospel readings of series A, after the accounts of the temptation and the transfiguration, which are traditional on the first two Sundays, take up the great Johannine signs, which are prefigurations both of the saving events of Christ's death and resurrection and of our participation in those saving events through baptism.

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Pause for THREE seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – A LENT 2

A reading from the second letter of Saint Paul to Timothy.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

Join with me in suffering for the Gospel,
relying on the power of God,
who saved us and called us with a holy calling,
not according to our works
but according to his own purpose and grace.
This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus
before the ages began,
but it has now been revealed
through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus,
who abolished death
and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

Pause for THREE seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:

◆ ◆ ◆

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – A LENT 2

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”



The **GOSPEL** of the **LORD**.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

The purpose of the Lenten readings is to prepare for the participation in the paschal feast.

The Old Testament readings focus upon salvation history as the presupposition of, preparation for, and in some respects a prefiguring of, the redemptive act of God in Christ.

The second readings set forth our participation in the death and resurrection of Christ through baptism and in the Christian life.

The gospel readings of series A, after the accounts of the temptation and the transfiguration, which are traditional on the first two Sundays, take up the great Johannine signs, which are prefigurations both of the saving events of Christ's death and resurrection and of our participation in those saving events through baptism.

Reading I: Genesis 12:1-4a

Since the rise of modern biblical criticism, the question has often been asked: Did Jesus intend to found a church?

If by that we mean: Did Jesus foresee and intend that the outcome of his work should be an ecclesiastical organization such as emerged in the second, the fourth, the thirteenth, or the sixteenth century, the answer is pretty certainly no.

But if by "church" we mean, as biblically we should, the people of God, then the answer is that the question is wrongly put.

For the people of God was founded with the call of Abraham (as the caption to this reading puts it, he is the "father of God's people"; see Rom 4:16-18). This makes it clear that he is the father of Christian believers no less than of his physical descendants.

Some years ago, there was a revival of biblical theology centered on the notion of the "God who acts." During that period the Bible came to be known as the "Book of the Acts of God." Theologians were constantly speaking of the mighty acts of God in history.

But then the question was raised: How can we today really conceive of a God who acts in history? How can the nexus of cause and effect be broken by God, which this notion seems to imply?

Part of the answer is suggested by this reading. God acts by calling key individuals like Abraham, and it is by these human responses that a channel for the execution of God's will is carved out in the world. It is because Abraham left his country that God was able to create of him a great nation, a blessing to all the nations of the world.

Christian faith since the time of Paul has seen that promise fulfilled not only in Israel's salvation history recorded in the Old Testament, but still more in the coming of Christ and in the history of the Christian Church.

This whole history can be understood as a response to the call of God, a call going out to a whole series of key persons, beginning with Abraham and culminating with Jesus Christ and his apostles.

That is why Paul can use Abraham as the paradigm of faith, even of Christian faith. Faith is obedient response to the call of God, and therefore it opens up channels for the redemptive action of God, in history and in the world.

Responsorial Psalm 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

This psalm is fully consonant with our interpretation of the call of Abraham. God works in history through his word (first stanza).

It is human response in faith, hope, and obedience that paves the way for the effective working of God in history (second and third stanzas)..

Reading II: 2 Timothy 1:8b-10

When the Episcopal adaptation of the three-year Lectionary was being made, it was felt that a reading from Romans would match the OT reading with its theme of Abraham's role in salvation history. The Revised Common Lectionary has agreed [Rom 4:1-5, 13-17].

Paul's judaizing opponents had appealed to the example of Abraham to support their claim that Gentile converts should be circumcised in order to become members of the new Israel. The Apostle was arguing with his adversaries on their own ground. For them, Abraham was justified by circumcision. Faith was not enough by itself. The same must apply to Gentiles who accepted the Gospel. Paul offers an alternative interpretation of Abraham's story. Abraham was justified by faith, and only after that received circumcision as a seal of his justification.

Yet, the passage from 2 Timothy is not inappropriate. It picks up the theme of calling from Genesis 12 and speaks of the call to be a Christian. It emphasizes that this call is based, not on our own merits, but on God's purpose set long ago-when he called, for example, Abraham. This long-established purpose has now been manifested in Jesus Christ, who has brought life and immortality to light.

This last point, then, serves to introduce the theme of the transfiguration, in which Jesus is manifested as the Savior who brings life and immortality to light.

Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

The Transfiguration looks forward to the passion and the subsequent glorification of Jesus in his resurrection. Luke's version, read on the second Sunday of Lent in series C and commented upon there, brings out more clearly the episode's connection with the Passion: Moses and Elijah talk with Jesus about his "departure [Greek: exodos] which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."

Matthew follows Mark quite closely, except for the addition of verses 6 and 7, the disciples' "fear" (so the Greek) and Jesus' attempt to quiet their fear by his reassuring touch and the words "Get up, and do not be afraid."

In the Bible, fear is always the human reaction to a theophany (see, for example, Rev 1:17). It is overcome, not by saying that confrontation with the presence of God is a casual, everyday experience which there is no reason to fear, but only by the encouraging word of Christ (see Mt 14:27; Mt 28:5, 10).

Reginald H. Fuller