

2nd Sunday of Lent, 25 February 2024

Scriptures: Gen.22:1-2,9,10-13,15-18;Rom.8:31-34; Mark9:2-10

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the Scripture readings for this 2nd Sunday of Lent, the voice that is heard figures prominently.

In the first reading, the voice of God seems to be asking if not the impossible then at least the inhuman. Isaac, the only son of Abraham and Sarah, was the child God promised so that Abraham could become the founding father of a great nation to be. So, here, not only did God seem to be asking the unimaginable, but also to be going back on that sacred promise.

However, we soon discover that, in fact, the point of the story is the very opposite to what it appears to be on the surface: whereas human sacrifice was commonplace in the ancient Near East, what is revealed is that God does not want human sacrifice. By careful listening, Abraham's understanding of God develops and grows, and their relationship of trust and faith deepens.

The voice of God takes center stage at the transfiguration, affirming a truth that, up to this point in Mark's Gospel, God had revealed only to Jesus himself at his baptism—his identity as God's own beloved Son—a truth that literally makes Jesus glow.

Finally, his disciples have come to the point where they are ready to hear his truth. But their listening is only partial. As Jesus descends the mountain, he starts to help his disciples to understand the meaning of his sonship: that he will be faithful and obedient to his Father, even to the point of having to give up his life. Jesus trusts God's faithfulness and ability to raise him from the dead. Yet this episode occurs shortly after Peter has protested at Jesus' talk of crucifixion and resurrection. He has not really been listening; all he hears is suffering and death. And it is

only after the resurrection that the disciples begin to really hear and appreciate what Jesus has been telling them.

As Christians, we believe that the transfiguration is not merely a past event, but an ongoing reality. God's voice is creative—God spoke and creation came into being. God's voice is transformative: Jesus literally glowed as God affirmed him as the Son. God's voice continues to be at work in our world today, and in our lives. But like Abraham and the disciples, we need to learn how to listen and perceive at more than just a superficial level. That takes time and practice and commitment.

So much in our world today is poised against that—namely, we tend to want things instantly and effortlessly. But there is no such thing as an instant relationship—with God or anyone else.

When we do listen in prayer—when we are able to step away from our own expectations and preconceptions and focus simply on the voice—we find that God's voice continues to be creative and transformative.

By making time each day quietly to open ourselves to the presence of God, we make room for God to affirm our dignity as God's beloved daughters and sons. And as that reality gradually seeps into our lives, we increasingly learn how to live out of that sacred space—to live as daughters and sons of God not as a moral imperative or commandment, but because that is who we know we really are at the very core of our existence.

Being the daughters and sons of our loving and caring God is something that shines out from our lives—because we have learned to listen to the voice, the voice of God.

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