

HOMILY – 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT “B” 2-25-2018

We just heard in the first reading and the Gospel of two groups of individuals climbing a hill. One is a father and son and the other is Jesus and three of his disciples. There is an uncomfortable and reflective silence among them as they struggle with some news they were not expecting.

The father, Abraham, had just been shockingly told by God: **“Take your son Isaac, your only son, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you should offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you.”**

The disciples, Peter, James and John, earlier had heard some very difficult revelation by Jesus: **“... he began to teach them that the Son of Man was destined to suffer grievously, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death”**.

Let's just imagine for a moment we could hear the inner thoughts and conversations going on as each group moved slowly up the mountains.

“Dad, where are we going?”

“I thought we could climb the mountain and just enjoy being together – the weather is so nice.”

“But, why are you asking me to carry this load of kindling wood? And why are you carrying your big knife that you use to slaughter sheep for sacrifice? And why are you so quiet and serious? Is there something wrong?”

Abraham could not reply. He was so confused by what God was asking of him. Why would the God he so faithfully served ask him to sacrifice his only son? As he looked at Isaac, he could not hold back his sorrow and anger at God. *“Why was this being asked of me? What kind of a so called loving God could ask a father to do such a horrible thing as to kill his son?”* Can we even begin to image what Isaac thought as his father tied him up, placed him on a bed of wood and stood over him with a dagger?

The disciples that followed Jesus up the hill must have been thinking some very confusing thoughts also? *What did Jesus mean when he talked about suffering and dying and being rejected? We gave up so much to follow him, for what? Were all the miracles we saw some kind of magic performed by a fraud? Was he just leading us on when he talked about establishing a new kingdom of peace and justice? Was all that he said just words, promises that he would never fulfill. We were convinced he was someone very special, now we wonder if all this journey with him was a sham.*

Each of us in one way or another have climbed or are now climbing our own journey of doubt and confusion. It may be a health crisis, a difficult aging process. It may be a family issue, a tragedy, a break up, an alienation. It may be a financial crisis, a loss of a job, an inability to find a job that will help me better care for my family needs. It may be an addiction I can't find the courage to face, a relationship that I know is not healthy, or a serious religious doubt.

Like Abraham and Isaac, like Peter, James and John, we are asking God, why? Does

God care? Will God help me through this or does he get some joy out of seeing me suffer? The readings speak to our personal anguish but also, and more importantly, of God's loving concern. He would never have permitted Abraham to kill his son. He encouraged the disciples by transfiguring to them to reassure them that death was not the winner. He would rise again and so would they arise from their doubts and fears. God wants to reassure us also of his desire to be among us to encourage us in our mountain experiences. He will lead us, walk along side of us and behind us always. God is faithful to his covenant "I will be your God and you will be my people." Lent encourages us to let go of our fears and trust God will not abandon us in our moments of doubt and discouragement. Let the words spoken by God at the transfiguration echo in our ears: "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him." Jesus invites us this Lent: "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest."