



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Father, through our observance of Lent, help us to understand the meaning of Your Son's death and resurrection, and teach us to reflect it in our lives. Grant this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Genesis 22:1-2, 9-8

Our reading shows how the revelation of God slowly unfolds. After Adam's fall, the Lord revealed Himself to Noah and his family and established a covenant.

This week, we read about the story of God's covenant with Abraham. The Lord reveals Himself to this famous patriarch and puts him to the test.

The test of faith is great. How could any human sacrifice a son? But, by faith in God, Abraham prepares to do God's will. In the final moment, God sends His angel to spare Abraham the ordeal of killing Isaac - his only son.

Because Abraham passes the test of faith, God rewards him with a covenant even greater than that of Noah's. This covenant gives Abraham a promise that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars and the sands of a seashore.

With Noah, God promised not to purge the earth again. With Abraham, God promised to fill the earth with children of Abraham.

These two covenants show God's desire to restore us to grace. But, as we shall see next week, God is not finished with His plan of redemption and restoration.

Question

Are you blessed, restored, and redeemed?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Romans 8:31-34

The second reading flows from the first. St. Paul tells us that - unlike Abraham's son - God does not spare His only Son. Just as in last week's readings, Noah's flood prefigures the baptismal waters which lead us to new life, our readings today show us how the sacrifice of Isaac prefigures the sacrifice of Jesus.

The sacrifice of Christ is our blessing, our restoration, our redemption. As Saint Paul reminds us:

"He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?"

A sacrificial offering for God is more than just the killing of a goat, bull, or even human life. It is a sweet-smelling oblation to God. As Psalm 25 reads:

Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones.

Jesus delivered his very life to His Father as a sweet offering. He did this for us! Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we remember His death and resurrection. He is our offering to God.

Last week, we were reminded that Lent is a time for us to recall our gift of Baptism. Lent is also a time for us to remember our gift of the Eucharist. We should make an effort to ponder this great Sacrament.

We should also pray for the RCIA candidates who will join us for the first time at the Eucharistic table at Easter.

Question

Did you ever offer up to God your own suffering or sacrifices?

2nd Sunday
of
Lent

Commentary

Gospel: Mark 9:2-11

The Church offers us the Transfiguration account twice in our liturgical year: on the Feast of the Transfiguration and again in the season of Lent. On the Feast Day the celebration focuses on the glory of God revealed in Christ transfigured and standing between the law and the prophets.

In Lent, we are to focus on the other meaning of Christ transfigured before Peter, James, and John. These disciples are called to “listen to Him.” What do they hear?

As they are coming down the mountain, Jesus tells them not to relate what they had just seen until Jesus had risen from the dead.

The disciples do listen to the Lord, but they don’t understand what He means.

As a post-resurrection people, we understand what He said. We know that Jesus had to descend the mountain of glory only to offer Himself on Calvary. As Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac on a mountain, Jesus would be bound to a cross on a hill outside of the temple.

As we will see, this is not an easy message for the disciples to accept. But, God calls them to listen.

Question

When has it been hard for you to “listen” to the Lord?

This Week’s Task

Consider attending Stations of the Cross on Friday or make a personal Way of the Cross at any time in the church or in your home. As you do, make it a point to “listen” to the Lord speak to your heart.

You may want to reflect on the stations from the perspective of God the Father or of Mary, who gave their only Son as an offering for our sake.

Prayer

The leader invites each member to pass around a crucifix.

The participants are invited to venerate the cross with a kiss or some other form of reverence.

As a member holds the cross, he/she will say:

Lord of Abraham,
increase my faith.
Father of Jesus,
help me to Listen!

The leader will then guide the group in praying Psalm 116. As you read this, “listen” to Jesus as He prays to His Father for our sake.

Psalm

Response: I will walk before the Lord, in the Land of the living.

I believed, even when I said, “I am greatly afflicted.”
Precious in the eyes of the Lord, is the death of his faithful ones.

Response: I will walk before the Lord, in the Land of the living.

O Lord, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the Son of your handmaid;
you have loosed my bonds.
To you I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and I will call upon the name of the Lord.

Response: I will walk before the Lord, in the Land of the living.

My vows to the Lord I will pay
in the presence of all His people,
in the courts of the house of the Lord,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Response: I will walk before the Lord, in the Land of the living.

Conclude with an OUR FATHER