

## Second Sunday of Lent (B)

February 25, 2018

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18  
Romans 8:31b-34  
Mark 9:2-10

For many years now I have listened to our veterans tell their stories often times reluctantly about the violence of war and combat. Much of what I hear is so graphic that I would never repeat it. My role as a therapist, counselor, and priest is to hold each veteran with great respect and always maintain their confidence. Most of them have scaled enormous barriers to give me a glimpse at what is so troubling to them. It is no surprise that many of our veterans do not have faith in God, in their fellow human beings, or faith in themselves. This is very real to me and I hope you are able to understand to some extent what I am describing.

This opening lesson from Genesis is not so different from what our veterans experience. This story traditionally called the "Binding of Issac" is heart wrenching. I do not think any one can read this and feel good about the incident. Sure Issac's life was spared and Abraham presented a profound faith in God, but yet, this is heart wrenching. You cannot help but wonder what was going through Abraham's mind as he gathered the wood for the fire, travelled three days to Mount Moriah, and was ready and willing to sacrifice his son, the love of his life. Isaac seemingly was unaware what was about to happen as he innocently asks his father where is the animal of sacrifice. All that Abraham could say in response was that God would provide.

Our veterans ask the very same question that so many of us ask, "Why would God put any one of us in such a heart wrenching situation? Where is God when all that lies before us is death and destruction?" Perhaps the only thing that saves this event is Abraham's passionate fidelity. God takes the risk that Abraham will respond obediently and Abraham takes the risk that God will provide. Neither will fail the other. We are told that God put Abraham to the test and Abraham was absolutely unwavering in his trust in God. Undoubtedly, God has become central in his life and would remain his primary focus. We naturally ask the question if this might be genuinely possible for any one of us. When we are being tested in our own life situations, would such passionate fidelity be possible? I am not sure that any one of us would be able to answer that question except in hindsight.

My hope is that I would be able to hold my faith in the Lord, regardless of what life-wrenching situation I have thrust upon me.

There is a connection between what we find in Genesis and what we find in the gospel lesson today. The true identity of Jesus is no longer hidden in his humanity. The presence of God erupts in transformed light. Moses and Elijah who endured their own suffering and transformation are present. And all is complete when the voice of the Father declares Jesus, "my beloved son." Jesus would be sacrificed and would become the source of life for all humankind. God choosing to let his Son be sacrificed tells us that God has an enormous love for us. God being with us in all things, tells us, absolutely nothing can be against us.

This powerful presence of God in Jesus prompts us to believe. Even in our most difficult moments of testing and pain, we must believe! Abandoning all our attachments, except our attachment to God, enables us to live. Jesus lived for others and we, members of Christ, are called to live for others.

In Eucharist, we remember Jesus was sacrificed. In coming forward to receive Eucharist, we affirm our willingness to sacrifice. We go into this new week with a willingness to sacrifice and help another feel the love of God.