

2nd Sunday of Lent, Year C, March 17th, 2019

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

There are two promises made to Abram in this selection: one is offspring and the other is land. (2)

⁵The Lord God took Abram outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so,” he added, “shall your descendants be.”

⁶Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. Abram’s trust in the realization of a promise that could not ordinarily be realized makes him agreeable to God.⁶ This makes Abraham (still called Abram in this selection) the father of all those who believe in God and his saving word. In Eucharistic Prayer 1 he is called “our father in faith.”³

⁷He then said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you Note that God will give the land TO Abram. this land as a possession.” Any people who didn’t own land could never be a nation, great or otherwise. Without land those people would continue to hold the status of immigrants. God promised to make Abram’s descendants the national occupants of a vast amount of land where they would live and serve the one God.⁵

⁸“O Lord God,” he asked, “how am I to know that I shall possess it?” Here Abram questions the promise instead of trusting in faith as he did in the first promise. So the Lord sets up a demonstration of his intention to make a covenant with Abram by asking him to sacrifice some of his livestock as an act of trust.²

⁹He answered him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon.” Here God established a rite of covenant as an external sign to show the commitment undertaken by both parties.²

¹⁰Abram brought him all these, split them in two, The Hebrew word for “covenant” means “cut.”² and placed each half opposite the other; but the birds he did not cut up.

¹¹Birds of prey swooped down on the carcasses, These are symbolic of the dangers that will threaten the covenant.³ but Abram stayed with them. Abram drives them off with his faith.

¹²As the sun was about to set, a trance fell upon Abram, and a deep, terrifying darkness enveloped him. The setting sun, the deep sleep, terror, and darkness express the awesomeness of the supernatural intervention. They prepare the way for divine revelation. This is a trance that opens the mind to revelation.³ At this point our reading moves to the confirmation of the covenant in verse 17 but misses the prophecy in verses 13-16. These verses express the punishment that God metes out for Abram’s failure of faith in God’s promise to give him the land. Since Abram believed that God would give him descendants but no the land, God tells him that his descendants will go into exile in Egypt for four-hundred years and lose the promised land for that period of time.²

¹⁷When the sun had set and it was dark, there appeared a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, This represented God. When the covenant is renewed at Sinai there is smoke and fire on the mountain and a pillar of smoke by day and of fire by night that leads Israel through the desert.² which passed between those pieces. According to Jeremiah, in this ancient rite, the action of the two parties — passing between the pieces of the victims — indicated a readiness to suffer the fate of the animals, that is to be similarly cut into pieces, if one were guilty of breaking the pact.¹ Here only God (represented by the fire and smoke) does so, because the covenant is unilateral. Abram makes no promises here; he is simply to believe God’s promises.⁴

¹⁸It was on that occasion that the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants Because of his failure in faith, the land is not given to Abraham as had been promised in verse 7, but now is to be given to his descendants.² I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates.” These borders were traditional in Solomon’s time.⁶ This is how the Book of Genesis portrays the people of Israel’s right to the land of Canaan and explains how the land came to belong to it only in the time after the Exodus. Keep in mind that Abram was from the line of Shem who loved Yahweh, and the Canaanites were the product of Ham and his mother. Canaan was cursed by Noah and his progeny were part of a long standing family feud.⁵

Philippians 3:17-4:1

The Church in Philippi loved Paul and sent Epaphroditus with gifts to minister to him in prison. Epaphroditus, however, took ill while he was with Paul and he almost died. When he recovered, Paul sent him home and sent this letter along expressing his thanks and giving encouragement and warning about the troublesome Judaizers (traditional Jews).⁷

¹⁷Join with others in being imitators of me, Paul knows that his witness will leave a more lasting impression than his words. He appeals to readers to follow his example as he models his own life after Christ. Imitation of the saints is a practice long revered in the spiritual tradition of the Church.⁸ “There is no better teaching than the teacher’s own example” according to St. John Chrysostom. Also consider that there was no New Testament to read, so Paul could not tell them to read it to find out what Christ was like. This letter was not written before 54-57 and may not have been written until the early 60’s.⁷ brothers and sisters, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us. Paul is probably thinking of Timothy as he put his name on the head of this letter along with his own and he praised him in glorious terms in the previous chapter.⁷ Consider the saying that “You are the only bible that some people will ever read.”

¹⁸For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Paul warns of the bad example of those who uphold false doctrines or abuse their Christian freedom, who lead a life steeped in vice and let themselves be controlled by their sensual appetites, and those that set their hearts on things which enslave them.⁷

¹⁹Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; This could refer to sensual appetites and worldly attachments,² but it may also be a derisive reference to the dietary observances of the Judaizers.⁶ their glory is in their “shame.” This probably refers to their circumcision, for Judaizers were proud of a mark which decency keeps covered.⁷ Their minds are occupied with earthly things.

²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, Paul was from Tarsus whose citizens were given honorary Roman citizenship even though he had never been to Rome. Our citizenship is in heaven even though we have not been there. Citizenship was very significant because it was a badge of honor and the source of one’s claims to justice (legal protection).² and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is referring to the Second Coming.⁷ In our culture, we want immediate gratification but at each Mass, after the Lord’s Prayer, we pray to be freed from all anxiety “as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”⁴

²¹He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body If we persevere, Christ will take our body, which is weak and subject to illness, death and decay, and transform it into a glorious body.⁷ by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself.

^{4:1}Therefore, my brothers and sister, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord.

Luke 9:28b-36

In the scene just before the Transfiguration, Jesus confirmed for the apostles that he was indeed Israel's Messiah, but he immediately made it clear that his mission would lead him, not to a royal palace nor a triumphant military victory, but rather, to the cross.¹⁵ The Transfiguration has three levels of significance. 1) Christ reveals his glory to offset the shock of his first Passion prediction. 2) The Father's voice, the chosen Son, and the cloud of the Spirit manifest the presence of the Blessed Trinity. 3) The prophets Moses and Elijah testify that Jesus will fulfill the Law and prophets of the OT.⁹

28 Jesus took Peter, John (This is the apostle who wrote the gospel of John and the Book of Revelation and who took care of the Blessed Mother after Jesus died.)¹¹ and James (He is the brother of John and the first martyr among the apostles.) Jesus also took these three along for the healing of the daughter of Jairus and for the agony in the garden.¹¹ and went up the mountain to pray. Note that Jesus is praying here when the Father speaks much like Jesus was doing at the Baptism in the Jordan for he was praying there when the Father spoke. There is a strong parallel between this reading and the giving of the law to Israel through Moses on Mt. Sinai. Mt. Tabor is the Mt. Sinai of the New Testament. Here God reveals his Son, there he revealed the law. Jesus took three apostles with him; Moses took three priests along. Here the glory of Jesus is revealed, there, the glory of God was revealed. In both there was a Cloud of Glory and the Voice of God. Here the apostles entered the cloud, on Sinai, Moses entered the cloud. The point is that Jesus is the new Moses, the new Law and the heart of the New Covenant.²

29 While he was praying, his face changed in appearance Throughout his public ministry, the fullness of Christ's glory has been veiled.¹⁵ and his clothing became dazzling white. This quality was sometimes called glory, sometimes brightness by the Apostles. The Israelites beheld some of this in the desert, when the face of Moses, after he had enjoyed the presence and conversation of God, shone with such luster that they could not look on it. This brightness is a sort of radiance reflected on the body from the supreme happiness of the soul.¹² White garments are symbols of joy and celebration in several Old Testament references. In Daniel, the Ancient of Days had garments white as snow.¹⁰

30 And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, These are two of the greatest figures of salvation history, both of whom were persecuted, both had experiences of God's presence on the holy mountain and each also anointed a successor prophet with the Spirit.¹⁰ Moses represents the Law, and Elijah, the prophets. Their association with Jesus on Mt. Tabor suggests that both the Law and the Prophets are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.³

31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus This includes the entire movement of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, which enables him to bestow the Spirit on his followers.¹⁰ that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. These three are in conversation about the passage or exodus that Jesus is about to undergo for just as Israel passed through the Red Sea and out of the land of exile, so Jesus will pass through death and into Resurrection and Ascension, which will enable him to bestow the Spirit on his followers.³

32 Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory This is evident in the changes in Jesus face and clothing.⁹ and the two men standing with him.

33 As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." The apostles did not want to

leave the mountain and they didn't want to lose the excitement of the moment.¹⁴ **But he did not know what he was saying.** Peter would have treated Jesus as equal to Moses and Elijah but God intervenes and corrects him saying, "THIS IS MY CHOSEN SON! LISTEN TO HIM!"

34 While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. The cloud recalls the one enveloping Moses on the mountain as well as the one leading the people in the desert signaling God's presence. At the Annunciation, the Spirit "overshadowed" Mary.¹⁰ A cloud removed Jesus from the sight of the disciples in the Ascension and Jesus predicted that he himself will come again upon the clouds of heaven and in 1 Thessalonians it says that at the time of the parousia the living will be taken up upon the clouds to meet the Lord.¹³

35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son, listen to him." Here we have the divine stamp of approval, the same as we heard at Jesus baptism.³ The Father's voice, the chosen Son, and the cloud of the Spirit manifest the presence of the Blessed Trinity. This is probably a reference to the prophet who is promised in Deuteronomy when Moses said: "A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kinsmen; to him you shall listen." Jesus fits this prophetic description, and because his teaching is backed by the approval and authority of the Father, he must be followed as the Israelites once followed their leader Moses.⁹

36 After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. When the vision ends, the disciples see only Jesus, suggesting that he replaces the Law and the prophets in the new age. The voice from heaven insisted that they are to listen to him from now on.⁴ **They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.** It was only after the resurrection that they could see clearly with the eyes of faith.³

Some of the material for this commentary is taken from: (1) "The Navarre Bible: Pentateuch," (2) The Commentary Notes of Sean Innerst and Time Gray, (3) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2004" by Aelred R. Rosser, (4) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 1998" by Lawrence E. Mick, (5) "A Father Who Keeps His Promises" by Scott Hahn, (6) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (7) "The Navarre Bible: Captivity Epistles," (8) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Letters of St. Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon," with Introduction, Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (9) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke," (10) "The Gospel of Luke" by Luke Timothy Johnson, (11) "The Founding Of Christendom" by Warren H. Carroll, (12) "The Navarre Bible: ST LUKE," (13) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (14) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn and (15) "The New Rosary In Scripture" by Edward Sri.