

## Homily of Second Week of Lent Year B, 2021

Genesis 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18; Psalm 116:10, 15-19, Romans 8:31-34; Mark 9:2-10

Abraham was called by God to leave his native land for the land God was to show him. Abraham, although 75 years old, obeyed God and left his father's house, his relatives, and his land and "went as the Lord directed him" (Genesis 12:1, 4).

Today, in the first reading, God commanded Abraham, "Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you" (Genesis 22:2). Abraham obeyed. He set out with his servants and Isaac.

As they were on their way, Isaac asked Abraham a heart-touching question: "The fire and wood are here, where is the lamb for the sacrifice" (Genesis 22:7). This question could have made Abraham to change his mind from offering his son, Isaac, as a burnt sacrifice. But Abraham, being a man of obedience and faith, replied to Isaac, "God himself will provide the lamb for the sacrifice" (Genesis 22:8). This was a prophecy because God provided a ram, not just a lamb, which Abraham sacrificed instead of his son Isaac (Genesis 22:13). For this reason, "Abraham named that place Yahweh-yireh ...," meaning, "God-the-Provider" (Genesis 22:14). God, then, promised numerous blessings to Abraham and his descendants because he obeyed his command (Genesis 22:18). God's providence and blessings accompany obedience to him and faith in him.

We recall that earlier, Abraham gave a prophecy when he said to his servants that accompanied him, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship and then we will come back to you" (Genesis 22:8). This prophecy was also fulfilled. After Abraham sacrificed the ram, he and Isaac came back to the servants and they returned home. Because Abraham was obedient to God and had faith in God, his utterances became prophetic. That is the power of obedience and faith. James 2:23 remarked about Abraham, "Abraham believed in God so he was considered a righteous person and was called a friend of God." Obedience and faith make us righteous and friends of God.

Abraham's obedience to God and faith in God are presented to us to challenge us and encourage us on our journey of faith, and in our relationship with God. If we obey God and have faith in him, he will bless us; he will provide for us; we will be his friends. He will shield us from forces against us. "If God is for us, who can be against us" (second reading, Romans 8:31). When we put God first, he takes care of us. "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, unshakable, forever enduring. As mountains surround Jerusalem, the Lord surrounds his people both now and forever" (Psalm 125:1-2).

Abraham's words, "God himself will provide the lamb for the sacrifice," was a prophecy about Jesus Christ; which was fulfilled when John the Baptist said about Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). St. Paul says in the second reading, "He did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all..." (Romans 8:32). The ram was sacrificed in order to spare Isaac. In the same way, Jesus, the lamb of God was sacrificed in order to spare us. God instructs us in today's gospel about the Lamb, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him" (Mark 9:7). He is the One who takes away our sins and the One who gives us life. The words of the Lamb "are spirit and they are life" (John 6:64).

When Jesus, the Lamb of God, transfigured, as we have read in today's gospel, his clothes became dazzling white. This is an invitation to us during the Lenten Season which is a season of grace and a season of transfiguration. We pray that as we journey through the Lenten Season, we may transfigure from disobedience to obedience, from weak faith or lack of faith to strong faith, from indifference to the word of God to listening to the word of God, from being far from God to being close to God, from sin to righteousness, from obscurity and gloominess to dazzling beauty. Through the transfiguration of the Lenten Season may we have a share of Abraham's blessings; and may the Lord surround us both now and forever. Amen.

**Fr. Martin Eke, MSP**