

CELEBRATE LENT

Second Sunday of Lent

**Life gains depth and richness
when purpose becomes the narrative of our existence.**

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

God's directive was simple: "go forth from the land of your kinsfolk to a land I will show you" (Gen.12:1).

Trusting in God's promise, Abraham began a journey. Like him, we are called again and again to leave the safe and familiar, the sound and the sane, to venture into territories unknown, uncharted, and unsure.

Genesis Chapter 15 tells us that Abraham had faith that God, who called him to enter into a covenantal relationship, would ever remain faithful. God's fidelity is dramatically described in the excerpted text referenced above. Ordinarily those who entered into the covenant stood between the calved animals and declared their oath to one another, signifying that they would submit to a similar fate if they breached their agreement. But in the covenant described here, God alone passed between the slaughtered animals. By not requiring Abraham to do likewise, God acknowledged and accepted human limitations. The covenant between Abraham and God was an unconditional and everlasting bond.

Like Abraham and Sarah, our fidelity to God calls us to journey, to move on, our roots sunk into no earthly place, our source of security in God and God alone.

Abraham's act of obedience began a lifelong habit of saying "yes" with his life to whatever God planned. Dwell on this thought for some time.

Letting go is not easy and to let go of a sure and certain and secure thing in order to welcome something new and untried is even more difficult. That is the challenge!

Psalm 27

Psalm 27 proclaims the firm faith and boundless hope that God is all that the Psalmist longs for and God will bring deliverance, salvation. The psalmist longs for the presence of God in the Temple and protection from all enemies. He says, "I believe" and "I trust" and speaks of "seeking his face". To "seek the face" is to be in God's presence, to be in communion with God.

**The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?
The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid?**

Philippians 3:17 - 4:1

Paul invited the Philippians to be fellow-imitators of Christ. He also encouraged them to be aware of those whose lives were scandalous and not follow them because "our citizenship is in heaven". Paul was saying to them that they must never forget that they are citizens of heaven and that their conduct must match their citizenship.

Remember who you are! You are fellow citizens with the saints! Be faithful to your calling!

He instructed them to "stand fast in the Lord". The meaning of "Stand Fast" as Paul uses is like the soldier "standing fast" in battle with the enemy surging down upon him.

Be strong! Stand fast in the Lord! Be rooted and growing in the Lord!

Luke 9:28-36

In this excerpt from Luke, we read about the voice of God declaring Jesus as the "beloved Son" and calling all disciples to listen to him. In the presence of Jesus, transfigured in glory, Peter, James and John felt secure, happy, at home. They felt they had reached the end of their journey and they were not ready to move on - they just wanted to stay in their experience of comfort, joy, security and glory.

Remember and rejoice in experiences of joy, success, greatness, wonder, glory, happiness - all of life's peak experiences and be grateful!

They had found a temporary serenity and security. But the journey of Jesus was not complete and the disciple's journey was not complete either. They had to leave this experience, come down the mountain and accept life with all its joys and sorrows, even accept the cross and eventual death. They had to continue their journey into the unknown, uncertain and insecure future. They had to walk in mystery! The journey of Jesus would take him to the cross and then to unending glory. His disciples must follow and travel a similar path. On their way, Jesus would serve as their map, their route, their guide and eventually their way - and the way, the journey and the end of the journey become one.

Be prepared to accept the inconveniences, suffering, pain, cross - all of life's struggles. Be strong and stand strong in faith during difficult times.

Saint of the Day, March 16 - St. Clement Mary Hofbauer and 13 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Clement Hofbauer was born in Tasswitz, Moravia (now the Czech Republic) on December 26, 1751. In his early youth, after the death of his father, he worked as an apprentice baker. Having become a servant in the Norbertine Abbey at Klosterbruck, he was able to follow the call to the priesthood by completing first his secondary schooling and then his catechetical, philosophical, and theological studies in Vienna, Austria. During this time he made yearly pilgrimages to Rome, where he encountered the Redemptorists.

One day after serving Mass at the Cathedral of St. Stephen, he called a carriage for two ladies waiting there in the rain. In their conversation they learned that he could not pursue his priestly studies because of a lack of funds. They generously offered to support both John and his friend Thaddeus, in their seminary studies. The two went to Rome, where they were drawn to Saint Alphonsus' vision of religious life and to the Redemptorists. The two young men were ordained together in 1785.

Drawing candidates to the congregation, they were able to send missionaries to Poland, Germany, and Switzerland. These foundations had to be abandoned because of the political and religious tensions of the times. After 20 years of difficult work, Clement Mary himself was imprisoned and expelled from the country. He returned to Vienna, where he was to live and work the final 12 years of his life. He quickly became "the apostle of Vienna," hearing the confessions of the rich and the poor, visiting the sick, acting as a counselor to the powerful, sharing his holiness with all in the city. His crowning work was the establishment of a Catholic college in his beloved city.

Persecution followed Clement Mary, and there were those in authority who were able for a while to stop him from preaching. An attempt was made at the highest levels to have him banished. But his holiness and fame protected him and prompted the growth of the Redemptorists. Due to his efforts, the congregation was firmly established north of the Alps by the time of his death in 1820. Clement might be called the second founder of the Redemptorists, as it was he who carried the congregation of Saint Alphonsus Liguori to the people north of the Alps.

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