

## THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT - C

On this Sunday as with the first in Lent we have a regular gospel reading, the Transfiguration of Christ. The three closest disciples see Jesus revealed in all his glory and are commanded to listen to him. The first reading picks up from last week's profession of faith, the wandering Aramaean is Abraham with whom God makes a covenant. The second reading has Paul pleading with the Philippians to aspire to the things of heaven where our bodies too will be transfigured.

The **First Reading** from the book of Genesis is the first book in the Bible and the first book of the Pentateuch, the five books of the Jewish Law. The book's origins are still uncertain, it speaks of mankind's beginnings and then the history of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob until their arrival in Egypt. Enough for us to know our reading this week is part of the Yahwistic document, one of three it is thought that go to make up the book of Genesis whose authorship, although attributed to Moses, is unknown. It was possibly put into writing during the reign of Solomon c.950 B.C. The Yahwist tradition has a lively and vivid style and although God is described in human terms the author has a deep sense of the divine.

The reading, 15.5-12,17-18, gives an account of the covenant God made with Abraham in the land which God promises will be given to his descendants. The reading begins with God telling Abraham that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the night sky because Abraham, although promised God's protection thinks it a waste of time since he has no children. Abraham believed God's word. God then promises Abraham the land in which he is now living, a promise he will never see fulfilled. Abraham wants to know how possession will be possible. The reading then describes the preparation of an ancient covenant ritual; the contracting parties passed between the parts of the slaughtered animals and called down on themselves the fate of the victim should they violate the agreement. Here only God seals the covenant by passing between the halves, symbolized as a flame because God's covenant is a unilateral pact, a divine initiative. The solemn promise sealed by God's movement can be seen as the beginning of salvation history for it is from Abraham's descendants that the Christ will be born and we now help make up the countless stars in the heavens, descendants of Abraham.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 26.1,7-9,13-14, is saying that in God's company there is no need to fear. Abraham walked with God and the psalm is a good reflection of Abraham's trust in God. These thoughts are evident in the first verse. In the second verse 'Seek his face' is to seek to know God, to live in his presence and serve him faithfully, all true of Abraham. The psalm ends with an assertion of trust and hope in the Lord, a helpful response for us in Lent.

The **Second Reading** is from Paul's letter to the Philippians. Philippi, one of the principal cities of Macedonia, had been evangelised by Paul in 50 A.D. on his second missionary journey. Paul is now on his third missionary journey and is imprisoned in Ephesus, the capital of Roman Asia. He hopes to revisit the Church at Philippi and does so in the autumn of 57 and at Passover 58. The letter is almost heart rending showing Paul's love for the Church and in his desire to see them, he writes a friendly letter, giving some news to his converts there. He warns them to 'Beware of evil workmen!' who will destroy the unity of love and joy which he so much desires for them based on humility, the humility of Christ and to that end he writes the Philippians a poem on the humility of Christ Jesus, 2.6-11.

The reading, 3.17-4.1, follows sixteen verses in which Paul recalls his own Jewish past, a past he has left behind him, he has now embraced the way of Christ and begins by urging the Philippians to 'be united in following my rule of life.' Paul warns the Philippians about the Judaisers, 'the many,' who wish to continue the practice of the Jewish faith. 'They make foods into their god,' refers to Jewish dietary laws and it is circumcision which Paul considers shameful but they are proud of the practice. Paul urges them to leave all this behind and head for their homeland in heaven where the Lord Jesus 'will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his own glorious body.' To achieve this end the Philippians must remain faithful, a wonderful prospect for us too as we continue our journey through the Cross to the new life of the resurrection.