

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT - A

Last Sunday we read of mankind giving way to temptation and losing God's friendship. The journey back to God is long and hard with many difficult lessons to be learnt. In today's gospel reading we see the end of the journey, Christ in all his glory transfigured before Peter, James and John but for them the journey back to God is not finished to help them along the way they must 'Listen to him.' The first reading tells us how God takes the initiative calls Abram and through his faith in God the long journey back has begun for the human race. In the second reading we listen to Paul telling us we have been called by God to be holy, this was God's will before time began but is only now 'revealed by the Appearing of our saviour Jesus Christ.'

The **First Reading** is from the book of Genesis 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. The book is a composite of three documents the Yahwist, (J), the Elohist, (E) and the Priestly, (P) that go to make up the book of Genesis whose authorship, although attributed to Moses, is unknown. The Yahwistic 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 Elohist tradition is more sober in style with an exacting moral code and an insistence on the distance separating human beings from God. The Priestly tradition contributes laws and is particularly concerned with the organisation of the sanctuary, with sacrifices and festivals and with the person of Aaron, the priest and his descendants. This is the tradition of the priests of the Temple of Jerusalem. The Yahwist and the Elohist were possibly committed to writing on the reign of Solomon c.950 whereas the Priestly was not codified until the Exile 587-538 and added to the Pentateuch after the return from the Exile.

The reading, 12 1-4 is the beginning of the long journey back to God. Adam lost God's friendship for all mankind now God takes the initiative calls Abram to leave his family to go with a promise and a blessing 'to the land I will show you.' So Abram cuts himself off from all earthly ties and with his childless wife Sarai and nephew Lot sets out for an unknown land. This is Abram's great act of faith which earns from God the blessing in v.3. It is to this unquestioning act of faith that the Chosen People owe their existence and destiny but not only Abram's physical sons but all who through Abram's faith would themselves share the same faith and become sons of God; as Paul said in his letter to the Galatians 'those who rely on faith receive the same blessing as Abraham, the man of faith.' The Church today is part of that multitude so Abram's call can be seen as the dawn of salvation. If you have time read down to verse nine.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 32.4-5,18-20,22, is a hymn to Providence. In his providence God takes care of us which is expressed in the first two verses and leads naturally to the prayer of the last verse, 'May your love be upon us , O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.'

The **Second Reading** comes from Paul's Second Letter to Timothy. Probably Paul's last letter written in prison in Rome while he was awaiting execution (c.67 AD). The letter is almost heart rending showing Paul's love for the Church and his desire to see Timothy again, "Do your best to come and see me as soon as you can" because he knows he will not get out of prison alive, "the time has come for me to be gone; I have fought the good fight to the end." Timothy was a convert of Paul's, a constant companion on Paul's missionary journeys. Under Paul's direction Timothy is caring for the churches in Asia, present day Turkey, and he is having to deal with some heretics who taught that God was completely unattainable and that Christ should be worshipped as the highest of the angels. Paul taught against this heretical teaching in his letter to the Colossians and now urges Timothy to remain loyal to the Apostolic doctrine he had received and to hand it on to worthy and carefully chosen successors.

In the reading,1.8-10, Paul is encouraging Timothy to accept the difficulties and hardships he is suffering and will have to suffer. He must try to rely on God's power and grace which 'had already been granted to us, in Christ Jesus, before the beginning of time but it has only been revealed by the Appearing of our saviour Christ Jesus.' Through the Good News which Jesus preached by word and deed death has been abolished and eternal life proclaimed. This is Paul's sound advice to the generation that followed on after the apostles.

