

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

March 8, 2020 A

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Loving God, in today's Gospel you call Jesus "beloved son." Through Baptism, we are your adopted sons and daughters. May we never forget our wonderful identity in you. Fill us with your light and wisdom as we prepare to share our lives in the context of your holy Word. Lead us with the Elect and Candidates to a fuller life in you. This we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator reads focus statement: In the Gospel, Peter, James and John have a "heavenly experience" in which a voice tells them to listen to Jesus. In the first reading, we have a concrete example of a man listening to and obeying a heavenly voice. In the second reading, Paul reminds Timothy of the holy life he has been called to.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Genesis 12:1-4

Last week, we listened to the story of the Fall. This week, we listen to the call of Abram (later changed to Abraham to signify his new relationship with God). Our reading introduces us to the epic journey of one man who, despite great odds, his age, and uncertainty, trusted that God would make him a great nation in which communities of the earth would find blessing. The reading consists of a call, a promise, a mission, a blessing, and Abram's faith response. "Abram went as God directed him." His obedience to God's call is a model for all believers.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 33

This psalm emphasizes that God's Word is trustworthy and that God protects us in our time of need. This is at the heart of what Abraham and every believer discover about God when we "place our trust in him."

SECOND READING: 2Timothy 1:8-10

After exhorting Timothy to be willing to suffer for the Gospel, Paul reminds him of the holiness of life he has been called to and how Christ grants us the grace to live a holy life. We are able to live in holiness because of the "grace bestowed on us," not because of "our works."

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Matthew 17:1-19

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

GOSPEL: Matthew 17:1-19

Last week, we encountered Jesus out in the desert doing battle with Satan. This week we encounter him on Mount Tabor having a heavenly experience. Jesus takes with him Peter, James and John, the same three disciples he will take with him to Gethsemane. Matthew says Jesus is transfigured before them. His face shines like the sun and his clothes become white as light.

Then Moses and Elijah arrive on the scene and begin to converse with Jesus. Moses represents the Law given on Mt. Sinai, and Elijah represents the Prophets. Peter is enjoying his mountaintop retreat experience so much that he wants to camp out and remain there. None of us would want such a glorious experience to end. Scholars tell us that the experience for Jesus and

for Peter, James and John was a taste or foreshadowing of Jesus' Resurrection.

But the whole experience becomes even more dramatic when a heavenly voice begins to speak, a voice like the one that spoke at Jesus's baptism. Speaking of Jesus, the voice says: "*This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.*" The voice is telling Peter, James and John that Jesus is God, that he is the Messiah, that he is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets *and* so they need to *listen* to his words. Overcome with the holiness or otherness of the heavenly voice, the disciples prostrate themselves on the ground.

On their way down from the mountain, Jesus tells the disciples to be tight-lipped about what they have experienced. Why does Jesus do this? Because he does not want them to talk about what they themselves do not yet understand and will not understand until *after* Jesus has risen from the dead. Then the disciples can tell the whole world about their heavenly experience.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse or image in the readings caught your attention or draws you in. Was there a verse or aspect of the readings that challenged you?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. God called Abraham and Sarah in their old age. If older or middle aged, do you feel God is still calling you to do his work? If so, in what ways? If younger, how do you experience God's call at this time in your life?

3. The religious experience that Peter, James and John had on Mount Tabor was unforgettable. Did you ever have a religious experience that has had a lasting impact on you? If so, what was that experience like?

4. In the Gospel, the voice from on high tells us to "listen to Jesus." How does Jesus speak to you? Do you have a recent example of how Jesus may have spoken to you?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestion: Try to be a good listener this week to God and to others.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God's Word and listened to others' reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Facilitator: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Jesus, your mountaintop experience sustained you through the dark times. May our moments of closeness with you also sustain us during tough times.*

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray? Remember to pray for all those who will be entering our Church this Easter.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Holy God, Baptism has made us
your beloved daughters and sons.*

*Free us to answer your call
wherever it leads.*

*Help us to put our trust in you
on the peaks and in the valleys of life.*

Amen.