



SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

FIRST READING: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

A reading from Genesis.

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old,
the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him,
“I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless.

²And I will make my covenant between me and you,
and will make you exceedingly numerous.”

³Then Abram fell on his face;
and God said to him,

⁴“As for me, this is my covenant with you:
You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations.

⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham;
for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations.

⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful;
and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you,
and your offspring after you throughout their generations,
for an everlasting covenant,
to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”

¹⁵God said to Abraham,
“As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai,
but Sarah shall be her name.

¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her.
I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations;
kings of peoples shall come from her.”

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

PSALMODY: Psalm 22:23-31

FIRST READING *Abram = AY-brum Sarai = SEHR-eye*

“Tell me a story!” It is the plea of children in every generation. This reading is the response to that sort of request by the children of God. Let that motif help the reader approach the text. And what a great story it is. It is a story of promise. A story of hope. Bring the grandeur of the Almighty to the words of God’s promise (as well as the power and the love!). Note well the name changes—they are indicative of the fact that after this *nothing* will be the same.

SECOND READING: Romans 4:13-25

A reading from Romans.

¹³The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.

¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)— in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

¹⁸Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.”

¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb.

²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,

²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

²²Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

²³Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also.

It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,

²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

SECOND READING

The author of Romans provides commentary on the first reading, which the assembly has just heard. The point is this: faith (“in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead”) will be “reckoned” to us as to Abraham “as righteousness.” We will be counted holy in the sight of God by virtue of our trust in the promise of God. This is the very center of the Christian tradition. This is the central hope of all baptized people. This text, though a kind of mini-lecture, needs the same kind of energy, born of conviction, that the reader gave to the first reading.

GOSPEL: Mark 8:31-38

The holy gospel according to Mark.

³¹Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

³²He said all this quite openly.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan!

For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them,

"If any want to become my followers,

let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it,

and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words

in this adulterous and sinful generation,

of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed

when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL

The two incidents in the gospel may be helpfully separated by a pause of substance between verses 33 and 34. Invest some time in a search for the most effective volume and tone for the words of Jesus in verse 33. Verses 34-38 will profit from a deliberate pace. The assembly needs time to assimilate ideas they have but this one opportunity to hear.