

FIRST READING: Genesis 18:1-10a

A reading from the Book of Genesis:

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, Abraham saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said: "Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way." The men replied, "Very well, do as you have said." Abraham hastened into the tent and told Sarah, "Quick, three measures of fine flour! Knead it and make rolls." He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice steer, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it. Then Abraham got some curds and milk, as well as the steer that had been prepared, and set these before the three men; and he waited on them under the tree while they ate. They asked Abraham, "Where is your wife Sarah?" He replied, "There in the tent." One of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son."

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 5

He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

One who walks blamelessly and does justice; who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue.

He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Who harms not his fellow man, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor; by whom the reprobate is despised, while he honors those who fear the Lord.

He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Who lends not his money at usury and accepts no bribe against the innocent. One who does these things shall never be disturbed.

He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

SECOND READING: Colossians 1:24-28

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians:

Brothers and sisters: Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past. But now it has been manifested to his holy ones, to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory. It is he whom we

proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL: Luke 10:38-42

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:

Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

The Gospel of the Lord

Reflection for the 16th Sunday of the Year C

Abraham believed in the One God. During his lifetime he encountered God face to face on several occasions. This particular encounter occurred after God's covenant with Abraham. Prior to that one, his name had been Abram. So, I wonder, why did three men visit him? We Christians recognize the Holy Trinity in this story; Father, Son and Spirit. But Abraham wasn't a Christian. Neither was he a Jew, technically. He was from a Semitic people and from the city of Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham was the Patriarch of three Peoples of Faith; Jews, Christians and Muslims. In this story, God's promise of a son and heir to Sarah and Abraham was still a glimmer in God's eye.

At the end of this passage we have heard that Isaac would be a reality within a year. It was Isaac's son, Jacob, whom God would rename Israel, who would have twelve sons and a daughter. These kids, Abraham's great grandchildren would produce the Israelite nation. The name Jew is related to Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah. Today's event of the Three Visitors set God's promise of Isaac and a nation into motion. There are several Jewish interpretations of who these three were. I will mention two. The first is that these visitors were angels who saw what God saw and who spoke in God's voice. If they were angels, the text does not name them. The second interpretation is that God was the central figure who visited Abraham and was flanked on each side by an angel on God's right and left.

Either way, our interpretation of them being the Trinity fits in well with the story. There is a famous Russian icon of the Trinity painted by the Russian monk, Andrei Rublev, in about 1410. It's one of my favorites. It depicts three young men who appear to be identical triplets seated around a table with a savory dish in its center. The color of their clothes is different. All three hold a staff and Jesus' staff is topped by a cross. Today's positioning of this story as the first reading, is about the hospitality that Abraham and Sarah offered to God.

Since God indwells in every human being, to welcome anyone we meet means to welcome God into our lives and into our midst. As we continue to welcome each other, into our new and yet unnamed parish, we carry on traditions that have their deep roots in Abraham and the book of Genesis. As we offer hospitality we welcome Jesus into our midst and know him as we share the Eucharist.

Today Paul rejoiced in his suffering. Was he a masochist? How could his experience make up for what the experience of Jesus lacks? We all can rejoice while in pain. Rejoicing and suffering are not mutually exclusive. There is nothing lacking in the sufferings of Christ. He died for our sins and won for us the gift of salvation once and for all. What Paul has actually done is to bring the cross of Jesus into the lives of the people he served. He has tried to draw a relationship between Jesus and living life. Pain and suffering can be for no good reason. But with the presence of Jesus in our lives, we can find meaning in our suffering. To have grounding in the cross of Jesus, Jesus has deep roots in our lives. Jesus may have saved us long ago, but he lives through, with and in us.

I have always had a soft spot for Martha. Without people like her, nothing could get done. Martha was the one who invited Jesus into her home. She was the host who had to make lunch. Mary was the host who entertained Jesus, sitting with him for company. Jesus was right. Martha was worried about many things. But he never told her to stop making lunch for him. Nor did he invite her to sit at his feet like her sister, Mary. Jesus did not want to intervene in this family squabble. Bear in mind, Jesus' words are also to us. Jesus was the reason Martha worked and Mary sat, to offer Jesus hospitality. Mary was attentive to Jesus' words. Martha, cooking in the kitchen, paid attention to the fact that Jesus needed to eat.

I remember an event like this when I was a young priest. I received an invitation for dinner in someone's home. I arrived and my host offered me a choice. While dinner was cooking I could sit, alone, in the living room or I could sit in the kitchen and chat with my host. I chose the latter. I even offered to help with the preparations. Didn't Jesus have that option? The last time this gospel came up in the Sunday Cycle, I believe I mentioned the possibility of Jesus' disciples being present too, making Martha's predicament worse. The text never mentioned them, though. This time around, I've stuck with the story of Martha, Mary and Jesus. Jesus comment about the "better part" is an invitation for Martha and us to enter a more intimate relationship with Jesus. Jesus' presence in our lives is the reason we all can get things done. And as we are forming a new parish, don't we have a lot of work to do? Jesus is present when we all gather.

May Jesus' presence become our motivation in all we do and in all we meet.

James D. Beath
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