

## Second Sunday of Lent - C

If you were to imagine for a moment the following scene: Jesus and his disciples are on the road, have been for some time. They approach Mount Tabor, in the north of the country, an impressive peak that towers above the surrounding plain, and Jesus turns to the disciples and says: "Peter, James and John, you come with me. The rest of you wait here until we get back."

The peak of Mount Tabor is a couple thousand feet above the surrounding plain. Getting to the top of it takes some doing. Jesus and the three were going to be gone for a while.

What would have been going on in the minds of Peter, James and John as they ascended the mountain with Jesus?

Were they just going along for the hike or did they anticipate something special? Whatever they thought was going to happen, I'm pretty sure that what actually did happen went way beyond what they could have expected, even in their wildest imaginings.

For a brief moment, they beheld the truth about Jesus and his place in salvation history.

What happened on that mountain was a peak experience, no pun intended. In fact, it was the mother of all peak experiences. It went beyond their

capacity to comprehend. How to explain it? Was it more real than unreal, or vice-versa? What really happened? And did it really happen?

After the vision vanished, they faced a basic challenge of faith: to decide to believe in what was beyond them or cling to their concrete, everyday, normal, explainable experience. Could they let God be God, or would they worry about things like setting up tents?

By nature, faith is always a call to humility. It leads us beyond reasonable expectations and prods us toward the unknowable, including unpredictable transformation.

The risk of that kind of faith sometimes seems beyond our capacity. As Paul pointed out to the Philippians, we need models to show us the way.

The story of Abraham provides us with one such model. Today, Paul invites us to revisit the scene in which God made Abraham the most extravagant promise imaginable.

"Look up at those stars," said God. "Can you count them? Well, even if you could, they don't begin to symbolize the future I have in store for you and your descendants."

This, in spite of the fact that Abraham was beyond to phase of having

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descendants—a reality he ventures to remind God about.

As we know from Genesis, that problem, so obvious and definitive to Abraham, was but a minor detail for God. So what was Abraham to do?

Today's reading says that he put his faith in God. Abraham gave God space to work with the emptiness in his life, and that was all he needed.

The faith to which we are called is not such a matter of mental gymnastics but the human task of recognizing our humility before God.

Our candidates for reception into full communion have experienced that humility as they come to a deeper awareness of their need for God and their inability to save themselves.

As we celebrate a penitential rite with them, praying for them during this period of final preparation for receiving the Easter sacraments, we are also being invited to place ourselves in the same boat with them.

Their preparation for the Easter sacraments runs parallel to our preparation for the renewal of our baptismal promises.

For them it's all too obvious that what is happening is too large, too profound to fully grasp.

If we are honest, that remains true for us even if we have been members of the sacramental community for decades.

If that's not our experience it could be because we have switched over from believing in the one true God, a God operates from beyond our ability to comprehend, to a god of our own making, a domesticated god which is nothing more than the projection of our own self-interest.

As we pray for our brothers and sisters who are moving toward their Easter encounter, their peak experience, it will be okay for us to pray for ourselves, too; that we can be humble enough to acknowledge our need for God and give him the space to work the miracle of salvation in us.

We are all in the same boat—with Abraham, with Peter, James and John, even with Moses and Elijah. We trust in the living God, the God who created the universe out of nothing. He is the only one who can bring to completion the work he has begun, to make good on his promises

Ultimately, we will be satisfied with nothing less and do not have to settle for it. Our candidates for full communion are moving forward in the realm of faith. Come on! Let's go with them!