

Morning Prayer for Lent

From Ash Wednesday until the Sunday before Palm/Passion Sunday

THE GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

Introductory Responses

We cast our burdens upon you, O Lord,
and you will sustain us.

Create in us clean hearts, O God,
and renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence
and take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help again
and sustain us by your bountiful Spirit.

Blessed are you, O Holy One,
the God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

Blessed be God: Source of all being, eternal Word and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Psalm Psalm 22:23-31
Psalm Refrain **All the ends of the earth shall turn to the Lord.**

The First Reading

At the conclusion of the reading
Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.
Thanks be to God.

The Responsory

Incline your ear to me;
make haste to answer when I call.

**Incline your ear to me;
make haste to answer when I call.**

Lord, hear my prayer
and let my cry come before you.

Make haste to answer when I call.

Hide not your face from me
in the day of my trouble.

Make haste to answer when I call.

You endure for ever
and your name from age to age.

Make haste to answer when I call.

You will arise and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to have pity upon her.

Make haste to answer when I call.

The Second Reading

At the conclusion of the reading
Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.
Thanks be to God.

The Canticle - The Song of Zechariah (Luke 1.68-79)

Blessed are you, Lord, the God of Israel, *
you have come to your people and set them free.

**You have raised up for us a mighty Saviour, *
born of the house of your servant David.**

Through your holy prophets, *
you promised of old to save us from our enemies,

**from the hands of all who hate us, *
to show mercy to our forebears,
and to remember your holy covenant.**

This was the oath you swore to our father Abraham: *
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

**free to worship you without fear, *
holy and righteous before you, all the days of our life.**

And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, *
for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way,

**to give God's people knowledge of salvation *
by the forgiveness of their sins.**

In the tender compassion of our God *
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

**to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, *
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.**

**Glory to God, Source of all being, eternal Word and Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now and will be for ever. Amen.**

The Gospel Reading

At the conclusion of the reading

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

Thanks be to God.

A Sermon for the Second Sunday in Lent

Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16

Well it's the second Sunday of Lent and we bump into one of God's promises. This one to a 99 year old man and his ancient wife. "I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." "I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations."

I got to thinking about that last bit. I know that as a Christian that I'm a part of that multitude – but Abraham has never come up in any family history that I've ever seen. My parents didn't tell me stories of my famous great-great.....grandparents Abraham and Sarah. In fact I can't say I feel all that connected to Abraham and this promise of God's.

But then I read this story about the author James Michener. As it turns out James Michener was a man without a birth certificate. He was abandoned as an infant. He never knew, never met, his biological parents. He was raised as a foster son in the Mitchener family.

Mitchener came to peace with his situation, with this particular vacuum in this history. That his novels often included characters with deep cultural roots and large, extended genealogy and extended family might reveal how it was he came to that peace.

Anyhow, despite Mitchener's generous spirit and kind nature, his accomplishments raised the ire of one of his adopted kin. In a rage of jealousy, mean-spiritedness and small-mindedness, some anonymous relative who never signed his or her real name but only signed as the "real Michener," felt compelled to send him notes whenever he gained a little bit of fame. Even after he won the Pulitzer Prize, this poisoned pen Michener wrote to him and said, "You have no right to use the name Michener," and denounced him as a fraud. The "real Michener's" closing line is always, "Who do you think you are, trying to be better than you are?"

A final letter came in 1976 after President Ford had presented Michener with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. A note came from his persecutor as expected, saying, “Still using a name that isn’t yours? Still a fraud? Still trying to be better than you are?”

There is a noble end to this story. Michener said that “these words are a cry that has been burned into my soul,” but he turned their negative thrust into a positive power. Michener acknowledged his wound-licking kin whoever he or she is, who presumably died around 1976 because the letters stopped; and he said this: “The note writer was right in all his or her accusations. I have spent my life trying to be better than I was, and I am brother to all who have the same aspiration.”

And that helps me understand Abraham and Sarah as my grandparents. Abraham learned to trust in the promises of God. He trusted that somehow he was worthy of God’s attention, that the gentle movements of his heart in relation to the divine meant something. And that he could in fact trust in the outcome of those promises.

And we all know that’s no easy thing. Abraham and Sarah are worthy of our eternal respect. After all it’s no simple thing to trust God especially when everything seems to be falling apart around you, when circumstances grow so unmanageable that fear begins to dominate our existence. And yet there are some pretty good reasons to trust the promises of God.

There is after all the nature of God; “Whose property is always to have mercy.” Infinitely loving, with our best interests at heart. Because God knows us through and through and is pleased to call us sons and daughters. Surely, we can trust in God’s good nature even if our own fails us from time to time?

And there is more, there is what God has already done for us. Who has better cared for you, sought after you, loved you, rescued you from the suffering that life brings to everyone of us? The prophets are right, God has loved us from before our birth. And in a deep place within us we all do know that God has never deserted us. Isn’t it true that the longer we live, the more evidence accumulates of God’s faithfulness and care of us?

And maybe the most important consideration, who else, what else, is worthy of our ultimate dependence if not God. God is our first and last best hope. Yes, we are the lucky beneficiaries of many loves, parents, friends, and spouses and partners. And yet behind all these does not the ultimate Lover stand, the one who meets us in those

around us, speaks through them, and mediates comfort and compassion through them.

The miracle of the promise to Abraham is that it lives still in us today. And it didn't really begin with Abraham did it? The promise began in the garden, ran through Noah and his waterlogged companions, to Abraham who burned his bridges and gambled his destiny on the reliability of a promise he heard from a stranger in the wilderness. Moses heard the promise, the prophets risked everything for the promise. Jesus embodied it and lived it and invited his followers to lose their lives for the sake of the promise because he knew something.

And promises are interesting things. It has been written of promises that, "we are our promises, and we lose hold of ourselves when we take no pains to keep them."

Yes, there is a contradiction here, there almost always is with God. The God given freedom we demonstrate in making commitments is the freedom to limit our freedom. One writer put it this way, "The person who makes a vow, makes an appointment with himself at some distant time and place and she gives up her freedom in order to keep the appointment." You freely tie yourself down so that other person can be free to trust that you will keep your promise to them.

Sure enough we lose a life by the promises we make but we also find one. And if we're wise in our promises, if we allow the gentle promises of God to echo in our hearts, then our promises will be caught up in the great commandment of a Loving God who is worthy of our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls and whose love we can't help but share with our neighbors just as we have known it ourselves. As people capable of making and keeping our promises we will be God's people and the God of Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, The Prophets, Jesus of Nazareth and the hosts of saints who have followed and do follow will be our God.

At the end of the day when all is said and done, life begins and ends with those who dare to make a promise and care enough to keep the promises they make. It isn't easy. But the promise is that God wills to be found in the power of a promise and you and I are the offspring of three who kept their promises. Abraham, Sarah, and God. And in the power of that promise we can strive to be better than we are and be brothers and sisters with all like us of every nation who . . . strive for better things. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith - The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY - *The Litany*

Let us offer our intercessions, petitions and thanksgivings, saying,
'God of our ancestors, hear our prayer.'

For the one holy catholic and apostolic Church
throughout the world,
God of our ancestors, hear our prayer.

For the mission of the Church,

In the **Anglican Cycle of Prayer**, we pray for The Anglican Church in the Region of
Central America;

For our **Bishops** Linda our Primate, Mark our National Indigenous Archbishop,
Anne our Metropolitan, and Susan our Bishop;

In the **Diocese of Niagara**, we pray for St. Paul, Glanford, The Reverend David Ponting, Rector, and the people of that parish;

For all the clergy and people who share in the ministry of our parish.

Today in our parish cycle of prayers we give thanks and pray for the following **people and their families**: Joan Cournoyea, Bill Cowan, Bruce Dear, David & Carol Dec, Melva Dell.

And in our **community** we give thanks and pray for those who volunteer and offer leadership to St. John Ambulance.

that in faithful witness together we may preach the gospel
to the ends of the earth,

God of our ancestors, hear our prayer.

For those preparing for baptism
and for their teachers and sponsors,
God of our ancestors, hear our prayer.

For peace in the world,
that a spirit of respect and reconciliation
may grow among nations and peoples,
God of our ancestors, hear our prayer.

For the poor, the persecuted, the sick and all who suffer;

We remember those who are close to us, for **those who are ill**:

Lucas, Maria, Kelly-Lynne, Jan, Aisling, Helen, Bev, Kathy, Adam, Wendy & Gary,
Maryse, Gary, Cassandra & Max, Shirley, Lee, Mary, Barb, Mylee, Betty, Patti, David,
the Guerin family the Sorley family, Parker, Betty, Pat, Michael, Larry, Karen, Vicky,
Carol, Rachel, Wally, Vera, Jane, Barry, Margaret, Wayne,

for all affected by Covid-19, and for others who need our prayers, ...

for refugees, prisoners and all in danger;
that they may be relieved and protected,
God of our ancestors, hear our prayer.

For all whom we have injured or offended,
God of our ancestors, hear our prayer.

For grace to amend our lives and to further your reign,
God of our ancestors, hear our prayer.

After a period of silence either the Collect of the Day or one of the following collects may be

The Collect for the Second Sunday in Lent

God of Sarah and Abraham, long ago you embraced your people in covenant and promised them your blessing.

Strengthen us in faith, that, with your disciples of every age, we may proclaim your deliverance in Jesus Christ to generations yet unborn. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Trusting in the compassion of God and gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray as our Saviour taught us,

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

THE SENDING FORTH OF THE COMMUNITY

The Dismissal

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Morning Prayer may conclude with the following Sentence.

May God our Redeemer show us compassion and love. **Amen.**

The Readings for the Second Sunday in Lent

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

When 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. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous."

Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I 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.

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

Psalm 22:23-31

22:23 You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

22:24 For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.

22:25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

22:26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever!

22:27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.

22:28 For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

22:29 To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.

22:30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord,

22:31 and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

Romans 4:13-25

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

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

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

He 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.

No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

[Mark 9:2-9](#)

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.

And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.