



SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

CYCLE C

Genesis 15: 5-12, 17-18
Philippians 3: 17-4:1
Luke 9: 28b-36

GATHERING

(An unlit candle rests in the center of a table in the gathering place. Several small unlit votive candles, one for each member, surround the central candle.)

This week's scriptures offer us a chance to find God in the darkness of our lives. Last week we reflected on the example of God's fidelity to his word and our attempts to be faithful. What are you able to see as expressions of your own fidelity to God this past week? What renewal have you been able to live out this past week? *(Members share briefly.)*

OPENING PRAYER

(The lights in the room are lowered. The central candle is lit. A selection of quiet instrumental music is played. The leader for this session invites members to attend to the presence of God in their midst. The community dwells in silence for a couple of minutes after the instrumental selection is complete. The lights in the room are turned up.)

Leader: God of the covenant with Abram,

God whose voice comes from the cloud,
We ask you to speak to us today,
To be with us as we strive to draw nearer to you,
The one who loves us so deeply.
Make us aware of your presence with us today and always.
We make our prayer in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

FOCUS QUESTION

Recount a time when you were afraid of the dark.

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are read aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or an image from one of the readings that particularly struck them this week. Members then go on to read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)

COMMENTARY

Lent is a time to discern how we can draw nearer to God. Today's scriptures offer us a reason for delving deep within ourselves to discover the places of darkness within us, the places where we fear God is not. Indeed, they demonstrate that it is from within the darkness that we discover God is with us at all times. In the darkness, God shares with us who God is.

In our Genesis text, God makes a covenant with Abram. After God promises Abram descendants and land, he is told to offer a sacrifice. God departs, leaving Abram to perform the sacrifice. Alone, Abram waits for God to return as day passes into night. While he waits, "a deep, terrifying darkness" surrounds him. We may wonder whether Abram begins to doubt himself, to question whether he really spoke with God. Then, in the midst of the darkness, a pot of fire and a flaming torch appear and pass through the sacrificed animals, sealing the covenant. In the darkness, Abram comes to know God will be with him and his descendants for all time.

In this week's gospel we see that Peter, James and John also have an experience with darkness. They are with Jesus during this transfiguration, an experience so awesome that Peter, seeing Moses and Elijah are about to depart, asks Jesus to let him build tents for them. It is as if he is asking Jesus to not let the moment end. Suddenly, a cloud covers them in shadow. Peter, James and John are frightened. From within the darkness, God speaks; God reveals that Jesus is the chosen Son.

Our faith journey is similar to the journeys of Abram, Peter, James and John. We, too, have illuminating moments when God's presence seems so tangible that we cannot doubt God's saving action in our lives. Regrettably, these moments pass, meaning that we, too, sometimes find ourselves in a deep, terrifying darkness, where it seems God is not. In the darkness, doubt often arises. We may doubt our purpose in life. We may doubt our relationships. We may doubt the reality of our experience of God. Abram, Peter, James and John give us courage to face the places of darkness in our hearts and minds because they tell us that it is from within the darkness that God promises to be with us forever; in the darkness, we come to know who God is.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ How does the word, phrase or image that struck you from this week's scriptures speak to your life or the life of the community, your family or your world these days?
- ◆ How fearful are you of the dark places of your heart and mind?
- ◆ When have you experienced God speaking to you from within your darkness?
- ◆ How able are you in allowing others to see into your places of darkness?
- ◆ What have you learned from the darkness of your life?
- ◆ In what areas is your local community afraid to acknowledge its darkness? What can you do about it?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

(The leader poses the question, "What does God ask of you/us in light of our sharing of life and faith this week?" After a few minutes of reflection, the leader invites conversation in response to the question.)

- ◆ Find a spiritual director to help you face your dark places and find God within them. Check with your parish office or your diocesan website for a retreat house near you.
- ◆ Learn about Taize prayer and how it might bring a contemplative experience to the parish. For more information log on to www.taize.com.
- ◆ Contact your local electric or gas provider and find out about their program for helping to keep the electricity and heat on in the homes of the poor and elderly in your community. Bring light and warmth into someone else's home. Support and promote those programs in your area.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The facilitator invites members to pause in silence. After several minutes, the facilitator lights a candle for each member as a reminder of God's presence in our darkness. The song "The Lord Is My Light." is played. It can be found on Utube. When the song is complete, members present the candles to one another.)

The facilitator calls for prayers of praise, thanksgiving and petition. Members respond to each prayer, "Lord, bring your light to our darkness." The session concludes with the Lord's Prayer and an exchange of a sign of peace.)