

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT (3/7-8/2009)

Genesis 2/1-18, Psalm 116, Romans 8/31-34, Mark 9/2-10

Every once in a while, the news media will report a family tragedy during which a mother or father will take the lives of their children and then, perhaps, their own life.

Our immediate heart-felt response is: How can parents ever harm their children?

It seems so unnatural to us.

That is why many people have trouble with today's first reading from the *Book of Genesis*.

Abraham is commanded by God to take his one and only son, the hope of his life, the gift of his old-age, and offer him as a sacrifice to the Lord. He proceeds to comply immediately.

What does God have in mind, we ask?

Can our God who speaks so often of love be so cruel and unfeeling?

The focus of the story is not so much on God's command as it is on Abraham's response.

All their adult life, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, have prayed for and hoped for a child of their own.

Finally, Sarah, who was well beyond child-bearing age, gets pregnant and gives birth.

The old couple is ecstatic – and then this!

God does test us – we all know that by experience.

In today's story, when the child, Isaac, innocently asks where the victim will come from, Abraham responds that the Lord will provide – and so He does

Trust this: God tests and God provides.

In the second reading, St. Paul points out that God did not spare His own son, but handed him over for the sake of us all.

How could God doom His own son to death, death on the cross, especially for the likes of us?

Only through love that knows no boundaries.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus is transfigured atop the mountain before his three followers, Peter, James and John.

The apostles see him, in one ecstatic scene, as he truly is: the beloved son of the Father, the companion of Moses and Elijah.

And still, we know what will happen shortly after this – Jesus will go up to Jerusalem, there to be arrested, tried and condemned to death, all to fulfill His Father's will.

What is at play in these readings is the awe-inspiring truth of God's incomparable love for all of His people.

Out of that love, He will give the most precious divine gift – Jesus, His beloved Son.

We don't know the ultimate purpose of God's will – except to believe firmly that all the Lord does, He does on behalf of this wonderful creation we call "the universe".

In the Bible, we are exposed to many instances of that divine action, some of them edifying and understandable.

Some of them mysterious and incomprehensible.

The mystery will only intensify as Holy Week and Easter draw near.