



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

## 2nd Sunday of Lent Year B

### ***God himself will provide the Lamb for the offering***

Readings: *Genesis 22: 1-2, 9-13, 15-18, Ps 115, Romans 8: 31-34, Mark 9: 2-10*

There is a terrible story tucked away towards the beginning of the Second Book of the Kings (IIK3v26f).

The rebellious vassal state of Moab is under siege from the rampaging and despoiling armies of Israel and every effort to break out has been thwarted. The land lies in ruins, their trees have been felled, their wells stopped, their land stoned. The king, Mesha, gathers his shock troops to try to break the siege and link to his ally in Edom. The Israelite line holds and forces them back to the fortress. And then, before their very eyes the King of Moab, now beyond desperation, appears on the heights of the city wall. He brings with him his eldest son, the heir to this once prosperous now broken land, the hope of his royal house. There, before the silent and astonished armies, he slaughters him as a sacrifice and burns the body to his god, Chemosh.

In shock and horror the armies of Israel withdrew. They gave up their imminent victory and departed the field of battle and the land of Moab. Child sacrifice was nothing new in the East. The deeply flawed king, Solomon, had in a fit of ecumenical charity to appease his many pagan

wives, instituted temples to this barbarity. Indeed whenever Israel reverted to pagan practice she would automatically revert to this appalling practice.

Excess children, unwanted children, deformed children, the fruit of adulterous unions, the offspring of cult prostitutes, all found a convenient disposal plant in the fires of Molech and Chemosh, the ever hungry gods of destruction. The Valley of Hinnom, running south from the Jaffa Gate, on the western side of the Old City of Jerusalem, was the site of these abominations. Jesus uses that place, under its name Gehenna, as the image of Hell, the place where the future was sacrificed.

And so to Mount Moriah with Abraham, the founder of Faith, the Patriarch of the Promise, the one in whose descendants all the peoples of the earth will be blessed. It is the most terrifying story in the Old Testament for a father to read. We travel every inch of that journey with the knowledge of the unspeakable sacrifice to be offered. The only son, the promise of the future, the beloved – all to be sacrificed to God, the very God whose promise will be undone by this strange and terrible gift.

It is a mystery that will only become clear in the fullness of time and in the coming of Christ.

As Abraham enters the third day and the mountaintop is in sight, he leaves his servants and he and Isaac trudge on alone, the final ascent to the place of divine encounter. Isaac asks the obvious question. 'We have the fire and the wood and the knife but where is the sacrifice?'

Abraham replies, 'God Himself will provide the lamb for the offering, my son'.

'God Himself will provide the lamb for the offering, MY SON.'

We know the rest. Abraham is obedient to the breaking of his heart. Isaac is obedient to his father's will to the offering of his life. And then the great and pivotal moment in the history of monotheistic revelation. This is where the true God is delineated from the false and destructive and demonic forces of pagan materialism.

God, by his angelic messenger intervenes. He does not seek the death of Man. He does not seek the destruction of the innocent. He does not require the cynical materialistic butchery of paganism. He seeks only the obedient heart and the sacrificial life.

He seeks the ultimate restoration of the life of Man.

Here on the mountaintop of Moriah, God spares the Son of Man. The future is given back. The hope of the world is restored. The promise, once given to the Patriarch and his descendants is honoured and will find fulfilment in the revelation of the One who is to come, the Messiah in whom all things will be restored to God the Father.

As we stand with Abraham on the mountaintop of agony and joyful relief we, with the long benefit of hindsight know the rest of the story. The Lamb for the sacrifice will be provided.

It will be here, on this same Mount Moriah, that the Lamb of God will be offered for the sins of the world. For the Moriah of Abraham will one day be the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, purchased by King David as a place of offering, and where Solomon will build the Temple of God. Here in the place where God spared the Son of Man, Man will not spare the Son of God.

Just who and what is being offered on the Calvary and the transformation that offering will effect in the destiny of Man is shown to us on another mountaintop. Before Jesus begins the Exodus to the Calvary he takes His disciples to the mountaintop where He is transfigured. He is revealed as the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets and proclaimed as the Son by the Eternal Father. The disciples are given a vision of the roadmap of salvation history and a glimpse of the glory of Heaven. No wonder they want to stay. No wonder they are sustained through the trials of martyrdom.

The journey of Lent must take us to Mount Moriah – all things offered back to God – and to the Mountain of Transfiguration – dwelling before the radiant presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament – if we are to make the journey through Calvary our own and our destiny with Him in the mystery of the Third Day.

This week's exercises: 1) Time before the Blessed Sacrament.  
2) Time in a lonely place – all things surrendered.