

**March 5, 2023**  
**Cycle A – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent**

Genesis 12:1-4a

Psalm: 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

2 Timothy 1:8b-10

Matthew 17:1-9

**Notes from Bishop Peter**

THEME: “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”  
(Ps. 95, Hebrews 3)

1. How hard it is to really listen! This afflicts married couples, parents and bosses who for some reason cannot hear what spouses, children or employees who are hurting are trying to tell them. Perhaps we all can learn from Abram (later God changed his name to Abraham = the ancestor of a multitude of nations), Jesus and others too.
2. Abraham: God asks him to leave his comfort zone, all his familiar surroundings, and go to a land of which he knows nothing. His only point of stability is his profound trust in God. He obeys and consequently becomes the father of many nations.
  - a. Jews and Christians and Muslims are called the “Abrahamic Religions.” For us, Saint Pope John Paul II made that clear, that we are sons and daughters of Abraham, through Jesus.
3. Jesus: At his baptism, His Father spoke words similar to those He heard at his Transfiguration: “This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. LISTEN TO HIM!”
  - a. Jesus LISTENED to his Father even though what He heard was painful because He realized that He will be the Suffering Servant who will save His people through His passion: “We like sheep had gone astray, each of us to his own way, and God laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53)
  - b. His Apostles thought He would be the glorious Messiah who would drive out the Romans who occupied their land since 63 BCE and restore home rule to Israel. That explains in part why they had such a hard time LISTENING to what Jesus was telling them. For instance, just before the Transfiguration, He told them “that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the scribes and be put to death and on the third day be raised from the dead.”

- c. Because of their preconceived notions, however, **THEY CAN'T HEAR WHAT HE IS TRYING TO TELL THEM.** "If today you hear his voice..."

4. Other examples:

- a. My friend, Freddy – young, thick-headed, macho - every Friday would go out drinking with his buddies returning early Saturday morning. He kept this up despite the pleas of his dear wife. One Saturday morning he came home and heard his five-year old son say, "Mom, here comes daddy and he's drunk again." It hit him so hard that he walked to his car and sat there for three hours before going to St. Peter Church in Hartford. There he prayed before the Blessed Sacrament and asked for the help to stop drinking. He did and begged forgiveness from his wife. **He heard God speaking through his son.** "If today you hear his voice..."

- b. Saint Katherine Drexell (1858-1955): Her father was one of the wealthiest men in America (from investments in railroads). Each year she received about \$170,000.00 from a trust established by her father, an immense sum given that a worker would earn maybe \$8 a week. During an audience with Pope Leo XIII, she asked him to send American priests and nuns to work with Native Americans and people of color. He said, "Why don't you do something about it?" She heard God's voice through the pope's and founded her own religious community, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, using her fortune, never for herself but to build schools on Indian reservations and in communities with black people. She also funded the establishment of Xavier University in New Orleans, the first university for black people in the USA. **SHE HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD.**

- \* The KKK threatened to tar and feather the pastor of a Catholic church in Texas. The sisters on staff prayed and two days later a tornado destroyed the Klan's meeting center and killed two of them. They never bothered the sisters again!

5. EUCHARIST: It is Jesus who heard his Father speaking to him and consistently did what his Father asked of him. May he help us to be open to his voice, no matter how it comes to us, and to act on what we hear.

***Amen.***