



SAINT JOHN HENRY NEWMAN PARISH

Heart Speaks to Heart

Briggsville | Buffalo | Montello | Pardeeville | Portage | Westfield

Genesis 12:1-4

Psalm 33

2 Timothy 1:8b-10

Matthew 17:1-9

Introduction to First Reading

The Christian heart sees with a biblical mind.

Mother Church, especially during Lent, wants to form our minds in the biblical worldview so that we approach life not with anxiety, but with the confidence of Scripture.

Last Sunday we stood in the garden.

The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed life into him. Creation was alive, vibrant, fragrant, beautiful. The man and the woman walked in easy fellowship with the Lord. They were naked and felt no shame.

That is God's original intent.

Original blessing precedes original sin.

Before there was failure, there was favor.

Before there was fracture, there was friendship.

Before there was shame, there was shared life with God.

We must remember that. We are created in the image and likeness of God. Lent is not about self-loathing. It is about returning to original blessing.

But then came the serpent — subtle, sarcastic, sowing doubt.

“Did God really say?”

The temptation was not just about fruit. It was about trust.

Would they let God define good and evil?

Or would they place themselves at the center?

Would they trust God — or try to become god?

When the world was captured by that lie, God did not abandon it.

God wants His world back.

So the rescue project begins.

On this Second Sunday of Lent, Mother Church always brings us to Abraham — the father of faith for Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Seventy-five years old. No map. No precedent. Just a voice:

“Go forth... to a land I will show you.”

And then that magnificent promise:

“Look up at the sky and count the stars... so shall your descendants be.”

Scripture says:

“Abram believed the Lord, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

But notice this — the stars are not visible at noon.

Abraham believed before he could see.

A few verses later we are told, “When the sun had set...”

Which means Abraham trusted in what he could not yet see.

That is faith.

Trusting God in the daylight when the stars are hidden.

Trusting the promise before the proof.

And so today, as the rescue story unfolds, we are reminded:

Original blessing precedes original sin.

And faith begins when we trust the voice of God more than what our eyes can see.

Original blessing comes first-so trust God first

The LORD said to Abram:

“Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk

and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you.

“I will make of you a great nation,

and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,

so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you

and curse those who curse you.

*All the communities of the earth
shall find blessing in you.”*

Abram went as the LORD directed him.

Introduction to the 2nd reading

St. Paul writes these words from prison. He is in chains. He knows his death is not far off. The Gospel has cost him everything — freedom, reputation, safety — and soon it will cost him his life.

And yet what occupies his mind is not self-pity. It is succession.

Who will carry the proclamation forward?

So he turns to Timothy.

Before he challenges him, he encourages him.

He reminds Timothy of the sincere faith that first lived in his grandmother **Lois**, and then in his mother **Eunice**, and now lives in him.

Parents and grandparents — that is not accidental. The greatest gift you give your children is not comfort or success. It is faith. A lived faith. A visible faith. A faith that shapes how you speak, how you forgive, how you endure.

Faith is caught before it is taught.

Then Paul reminds Timothy of that sacred moment when hands were laid upon him. He tells him to “*stir into flame the gift of God.*” Faith is not static. It must be rekindled. Strengthened. Fed.

And now Paul turns to something pivotal — how to understand hardship.

Because following Christ does not remove suffering. It reframes it.

So before we hear these words, I want you to ask yourself:

What is the hardship in my life right now?

Where is the cross?

What feels unfair this Lent?

Where am I tempted to grow discouraged?

And then — let us be humble enough, docile enough — to receive Paul’s instruction to Timothy:
“Bear your share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God.”

Beloved:

*Bear your share of hardship for the gospel
with the strength that comes from God.*

*He saved us and called us to a holy life,
not according to our works
but according to his own design
and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began,
but now made manifest
through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus,
who destroyed death and brought life and immortality
to light through the gospel.*

Homily after the gospel reading

“Bear your share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God.”

Have you ever noticed how two people can go through the same hardship — the same diagnosis, the same disappointment, the same loss — and respond completely differently?

One becomes bitter. Cynical. Hardened.
Another becomes deeper. Softer. More surrendered.

Same hardship. Different response.

(Hold up the Play-Doh and crayons.)

What happens when Play-Doh sits in the sun? It hardens. It cracks. It becomes brittle.

What happens when crayons sit in the sun? They melt.

The same sun that hardens clay melts wax.

That's what St. Paul is talking about.

Paul bore hardship differently because he came to a deep awareness:
"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

He could say, "I rejoice in my sufferings," because he understood something — suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts.

Paul did not see his life as self-improvement.
He saw it as participation.
Union.
Friendship.
Christ living in him.

And then he gives us the order — and the order matters.

"He saved us and called us to a holy life."

Not: "Be holy and then God will save you."
No.
He saved us first.
Then He calls us to holiness.

You don't behave your way into salvation.
You receive salvation — and then you live differently.

How?

Look at the cross.

On the cross, Christ gave Himself for us.
On the altar, Christ gives Himself to us.

Every time you come to Mass, every time you say "Amen" at Communion, don't let it just roll off your lips.

Amen means, "So be it."
It means, "I agree."
It means, "Let this be true in me."

You are allowing grace into your heart.
You are entering union with the living Christ.

We become what we receive.

If you receive Christ hardened, you will leave hardened.
If you receive Christ surrendered, you will leave transformed.
The Eucharist does not force you open — it melts what you allow Him to touch.”

And then we are sent.

So don't forget:

The same sun that hardens Play-Doh also melts wax.

The question isn't whether hardship will come.

The question is:
Will it harden you — or melt you?