Through Obedience we are transformed.

When Abram was 75 years old God made a promise to Abram and Sara that he would make he would made of him a great nation and that his descendants would inherit the land. When he was 99 the covenant of circumcision began and he was told that he would be the father of a host of nations and his name was changed to Abraham. It was a covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham. The problem was that Abraham had no children. Imagine what that was like. God said I will be your God and you will be my people but there were no children. Imagine the conversations between Abraham and Sara. Do you ever have days where things seem impossible where you think you are drowning? You have to let go and that is what they did. They had to trust and become people of faith. Eventually when he was 100 after 25 years of waiting his son Isaac was born.

Today we continue the reading from Genesis and Abraham is called by God and without hesitation says “Here I am,” but his response is closer to a soldier saying “Yes, sir.” He was ready to do whatever God wanted. God asked him to take that most beloved possession and sacrifice his descendent. The descendent that would fulfill the covenant God had made with him. Abraham had learned through the last 40 years to trust God and knew that somehow God would provide and keep his word, his covenant with him. So they set off and Isaac was about 13 and it was a three day journey. Isaac carried the wood up the mountain just as Jesus carried his cross. At the last moment right before Abraham was to sacrifice his son, God sent an angel to stop him and told him because of his great faith that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. Abraham lived to 175 and his longevity is seen as a blessing from God. Abraham is a model of faith and love and did not withhold his own son. This becomes a foreshadowing of the death and sacrifice of Jesus the Son of God. Because of his faith Abraham became the Father of three great religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Even today people say, “May you be blessed as Abraham.”

The story comes forward 19 Centuries. Let me put the Gospel into a perspective. Peter affirms that Jesus is the Messiah but when Jesus tells him that the Messiah must suffer and die and in three days will rise again. Peter rebukes Jesus saying that will never happen. Jesus seeing the disciples says to Peter “Get behind me Satan you are judging by man’s standards not God’s.” Imagine the confusion on the part of the disciples. How do we learn to judge by God’s standards? How do we learn to be people of faith like our Father Abraham? How do we let go control?

As we continue with the Gospel, Jesus takes Peter, James and John up on a high maintain and suddenly Jesus changes before their eyes and Elijah and Moses appear talking with him, the great Prophet and law giver with the Rabbi. Peter wanted this to go on forever. Just like we want our good days to last forever but they don’t. A cloud overtakes them, just as there was a cloud over Mt. Saini with Moses and the 10 Commandments and a cloud over the Arc of the Covenant by day. This cloud was a sign of the presence us God. Just as when Jesus was baptized in the Jordon a voice comes the cloud. “This is my beloved son. Listen to him.”

How do we listen to God? Jesus goes from Mt. Tabor to Jerusalem where he suffers and dies. How do we understanding our suffering? How do we develop faith like that of Abraham? What gave Jesus the courage to embrace his death? Abraham kept the scriptures close to his heart. He aligned himself to the scriptures. Jesus knew and lived the scriptures. He knew of his Father’s love for all of humanity.

Paul also knew this for he said, “If God is for us who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?”

God gave us his most precious gift his Son to teach us to love by letting go and sacrificing, by making peace with our enemies, and by caring for the poor. God does not care about our mistakes for his Son has reconciled all.

Utilize this time of Lent to grow in faith and to be transformed by the Sacred Scriptures and the Sacraments. Eat the Body and Blood of Christ and become one with Christ. See the God of love around you and let go of your fears and apprehensions. See the hand of God working in your family, household and community. Reach out to the poor and lost and bring the Gospel of love to them. .