

## 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

### Genesis 18:1-10a

<sup>1</sup>The Lord appeared to Abraham by the terebinth (grove of oak trees) of Mamre, In this grove of oak trees near Hebron, Abraham pitched his tent and built an altar to the Lord.(Gen 13:18) as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot.

<sup>2</sup>Looking up, Abraham saw three men standing nearby. The Lord appears to Abraham as three guests. In 19:1 we find that two are referred to as angels and the speaker is thought to be Yahweh. This is in the Jewish tradition. However, some of the Fathers of the Church interpreted this appearance as an early announcement of the mystery of the Holy Trinity reflected in the three persons whom Abraham addresses with the singular “Sir” in verse 3.<sup>3</sup> When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said:

<sup>3</sup>“Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant.

<sup>4</sup>Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree.

<sup>5</sup>Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way.” Hospitality is a much-prized virtue in the desert. The tradition of Abraham’s hospitality was intended to show that this virtue is most pleasing to God and he who exhibits it entertains God in the traveler.<sup>6</sup> This event is referred to in Hebrews 13:2 “Do not neglect to show hospitality, for by that means some have entertained angels without knowing it.” The men replied, “Very well, do as you have said.” God speaks to Abraham directly, as he spoke to Adam before he committed sin.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Abraham hastened into the tent and told Sarah, “Quick, three measures of fine flour! This was probably about two gallons.<sup>3</sup> Knead it and make rolls.”

<sup>7</sup>He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice steer, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it.

<sup>8</sup>Then Abraham got some curds (soft cheese) and milk, as well as the steer that had been prepared, and set these before the three men; Here we have God eating with men. and he waited on them under the tree while they ate. The story of the hospitality of Abraham serves as a model for all genuine hospitality, offering water, rest and food. As a member of a civilization of nomads, he practiced the customary hospitality and benefited from it; but this account in Scripture turns the practice into a model-action, which will become a law in Israel. Note some of the qualities of this hospitality: it accepts the unexpected and the inconvenient. It is eager and generous and in this case the whole household was asked to cooperate. It involves an invitation to sit at table thus giving bread for the body and dialogue for the heart.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>9</sup>They asked Abraham, “Where is your wife Sarah?” He replied, “There in the tent.”

<sup>10a</sup>One of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son.”

Abraham had given up any hope of a child by his wife Sarah, for both of them were advanced in age, she being 90 and he being 100.(Gen 17:17) Jane Marie Thibault raises the very interesting question of why God chose people of age rather than youth to have and raise this special child.<sup>1</sup> Because Abraham believed in God and walked in his presence and in covenant with him, the patriarch is ready to welcome a mysterious Guest into his tent. Abraham’s remarkable hospitality at Mamre foreshadows the annunciation of the true Son of the promise, Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> We hear in this reading the beginning of our own salvation history. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has plans for us—and they begin in the book of Genesis, not the gospel of Matthew.<sup>2</sup>

### Colossians 1:24-28

#### Brothers and sisters:

<sup>24</sup>Now I rejoice The joy comes from the discovery of the meaning of suffering. The Apostle shares his own discovery and rejoices in it because of all those whom it can help—just as it helped him—to understand the redemptive meaning of suffering.<sup>13</sup> in my sufferings This refers to the many afflictions that Paul endured throughout his missionary career.<sup>7</sup> Paul is writing this from prison so it is natural that he should refer to his sufferings.<sup>2</sup> for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of

his body, which is the church, CHRIST'S DEATH ON THE CROSS WAS ENTIRELY SUFFICIENT TO SAVE ALL MEN. However, Christ and the Church are one mystical person, and while the merits of Christ, the head, are infinite, the saints acquire merit in a limited degree. What is "lacking", then, pertains to the afflictions of the entire Church, to which Paul adds his own amount.<sup>7</sup> WHILE GOD DOESN'T NEED OUR HELP, HE CHOOSES THAT WE HELP HIM.<sup>12</sup> Paul is saying that his sufferings are clear evidence of Christ at work in the Christian mission—because suffering is an inevitable part of being a disciple.<sup>2</sup> However, human beings can enter deliberately into the divine plan by their actions, their prayers, and their sufferings. They then fully become "God's fellow workers" and co-workers for his kingdom.<sup>15</sup> (CCC 307) Jesus calls his disciples to take up their cross and follow him. St. Rose of Lima wrote: "Apart from the cross there is no other ladder by which we may get to heaven." In his suffering Christ left us an example so that we should follow in his steps.<sup>15</sup> (CCC 618) It is in our suffering that we take on the priestly role proper to every follower of Christ mentioned in 1 Peter 2:5, "You too are living stones, built as an edifice of spirit, into a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."<sup>12</sup> We do this through the MORNING OFFERING in which we strive to take seriously the call we received in baptism to be "a royal priesthood."<sup>14</sup> However, our suffering is best offered up in union with Christ's Body in the sacrifice of the MASS.<sup>12</sup> We are a royal nation of priests. The role of every priest is to offer sacrifice to God for the expiation of sin and in glory of His name.<sup>12</sup> In Fr. Hardon's Archives, he speaks of three levels of miracles, the second of which is called "moral miracles." (This is a higher level than the physical miracles that are more common.) Here we find the manifestation of miraculous power in favor of moral virtue even to the heights of heroism. Among these graces none is more exalted than the power of EXTRAORDINARY PATIENCE IN SUFFERING.<sup>11</sup> In a new collection of the letters of St. Padre Pio called "Secrets Of A Soul" Christ explained to him in a vision that He gave trials to those closest to His Heart. "Do not fear, I will make you suffer, but I will also give you strength. I wish your soul to be tried and purified through this daily and hidden martyrdom."<sup>16</sup> In the Apostolic Exhortation, "Salvifici doloris", which covers many aspects of Redemptive Suffering, Pope John Paul II wrote: "It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the force of the Redemption." In the letter he also points out that Sacred Scripture is a great book about suffering in its many forms.<sup>13</sup> In 2004 Pope John Paul II spoke to a group of pilgrims in St. Peter's Square and offered some insights on Psalm 41 including the idea that "suffering in itself can conceal a secret value and become a path of purification, interior freedom and enrichment for the soul. It is an invitation to overcome our superficiality, vanity, egoism and sin, and to entrust ourselves more deeply to God and to his saving will."

**25of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God,** It is God who called Paul to preach and to reveal the mystery of God's plan for salvation.<sup>9</sup>

**26the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past.** The "mystery" now revealed is God's eternal plan to give salvation to men, both Jews (in the past) and Gentiles, (now included) making all without distinction co-heirs of glory and members of a single body, which is the Church.<sup>8</sup> **But now it has been manifested to his holy ones,** It is in the Church that Christ fulfills and reveals this mystery.<sup>15</sup> (CCC 772)

**27to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory.** Most educators today have agreed that it is impossible to teach knowledge to every person, because not everyone is capable of learning it. We can look around today and see that not everyone has the same gifts. There are gifts which some will never attain. There are those who are color-blind and to whom the wonders of art mean nothing. There are those who are tone deaf and the glory of music does not exist. Not everyone can be a singer, a writer, a student, or a preacher. These are gifts which some will never possess. There are privileges a person will never enjoy. There are some heights of fame and glory that some will never scale but the mystery that Paul brought to the world through his preaching was that to everyone there is available the Good News that THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS DWELLS WITHIN EACH ONE OF US.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>28</sup>It is he whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect Paul aims to bring believers to a deeper understanding of the gospel and to a deeper commitment to apply it to their daily lives. Perfection is a goal that requires both effort and endurance.<sup>7</sup> in Christ. God's plan is meant for everyone in contrast to the Greek mystery religions, which were revealed only to initiates and were not available to all.<sup>5</sup>

### **Luke 10:38-42**

*In this Gospel reading we see Martha rushing about doing the tasks associated with hospitality. To judge from the story of the Good Samaritan, which comes right before this, Martha should have been praised for her practical service to Jesus but, in fact, he challenges her priorities. This shows us that the whole gospel is not contained in loving your neighbor, no matter how important that is. Christian discipleship is first and foremost surrendering to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. There must be time to listen to his word.<sup>10</sup>*

<sup>38</sup>Jesus entered a village Bethany was about two miles east of Jerusalem. It was the home of Lazarus (who was raised from the dead) and his sisters.<sup>6</sup> where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. Martha was the eldest and the mistress of the house. Her feast is July 29. She is recognized as the patron saint of cooks.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>39</sup>She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Here we have a woman in the role of disciple, sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to his word. Contained within Jesus' soft rebuke to Martha for her expression of frustration is confirmation of Mary's discipleship.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Martha, burdened with much serving, Jesus probably brought other guests with him. came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me."

<sup>41</sup>The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. "Things" such as service, action, etc., though valuable in themselves, tend to absorb the attention of the mind so as to become an obstacle to the movements of the heart.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>42</sup>There is need of only one thing. That is, attention to the guest. When the Lord visits us, everything else must be reduced to a minimum, to what is indispensable.<sup>4</sup> Mary has chosen the better part "Better" implies a relation to something that is already good. We could say that the better portion of Mary does not in any way lessen the excellent portion of Martha.<sup>4</sup> and it will not be taken from her." Martha was preoccupied with hospitality while Mary gave her full attention to the guest himself. Her quiet devotion displayed greater reverence for Jesus than Martha's anxious toil. St. Gregory the Great wrote "the two women signify two dimensions of the spiritual life. Martha signifies the active life as she busily labors to honor Christ through her work. Mary exemplifies the contemplative life as she sits attentively to listen and learn from Christ. While both activities are essential to Christian living, the latter is greater than the former. For in heaven the active life terminates, while the contemplative life reaches its perfection."<sup>17</sup>

*Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "A Deepening Love Affair: The Gift of God in Later Life" by Jane Marie Thibault, (2) "Workbook For Lectors And Gospel Readers: 1995" by Aelred Rosser, (3) "The Navarre Bible: PENTATEUCH," (4) "Saint Joseph Commentary On The Sunday Readings: Year C" by Achille DeGeest, O.F.M., (5) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (6) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (7) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Letters of St. Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (8) "The Navarre Bible: Captivity Epistles," (9) "workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 1998" by Lawrence E. Mick, (10) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn, (11) "Fr. Hardon Archives -Christ the Miracle Worker in the Eucharist" by Father John A. Hardon, S.J., (12) "Bible Basics" by Steve Kellmeyer, (13) "Salvifici doloris" This Apostolic Letter was written Feb. 11, 1984, (14) "Apostleship Of Prayer: The Official Internet Site of the US National Office", (15) "Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (16) "Secrets of a Soul: Padre Pio's Letters to His Spiritual Director" by Padre Pio, (17) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (18) "1993 Catholic Almanac" Edited by Felician A. Foy, O.F.M., and (19) "workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2007" by James L. Weaver.*

*In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.*