

Every time I sit down to write the weekend homily, the process begins with prayer: “Lord, through **these** readings,” or, “In **this** Liturgical season, what do you want to say to us; what are you **asking** of us?” As an ordained priest, discerning and naming what God might be saying is my **primary** responsibility. My **challenge** is to do so in ways which offer both nourishment and invitation to personal transformation. This weekend and next, the message has to do with sacrificial giving as an element of trust. We do this for two weeks every year at **this** time because financial giving is one of the three pillars of Lent – prayer, fasting and almsgiving – and because giving is a **valuable measure** of every Christian’s faith journey. Money **can** be a challenging topic to preach about **or listen to**, but only if our approach to money is, “I don't have enough,” or “I earned it so it’s mine.” All our readings today invite the choice to trust in God's provision over personal security and comfort, so let’s dive in.

“The Lord said to Abram, ‘Leave behind everything that gives you security – **your land**, your family, and your wealth – for a **land** that I will show you.’” What’s going on here? Abram doesn't yet know who God is in his life. This is the first time he hears God and it’s a voice inviting him to take a journey of trust - a journey which begins with Abram’s ‘Yes’ to leaving behind **everything** that gives him safety and security. For us, and in the light of Jesus' resurrection, this **Promised ‘land’** is not the modern state of Israel, but the promise of proximity **to** and intimacy **with** the person of Jesus – not just Sacramentally, but supernaturally, because He is risen and in our midst. See, it’s hard to trust God’s promises **and** respond in concrete human ways if we’ve never heard God speaking. We can **believe** that God is real, that Jesus is fully present in the Eucharist, and that if we’re baptised, we’re a child of God, but it’s **hard** to give up **any** safety and security, let alone financial security, if we’ve never discerned God inviting us to do so. If you haven’t yet heard God speak through **(heart)** these ears, hear Him now through

(ears) these ears. *“Trust me enough [Jesus says] to loosen your grip on what makes you feel safe, and come with me into the deeper life I want to share with you – a life of intimacy, joy and fulfilment.”* While our communal response to that word is explicit in today's Psalm response – *“Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you”* - it's a deeply individual choice whether or not we respond in concrete ways such as offering God more of our wealth *viz-a-viz* safety and security.

It can be scary to choose trust in concrete ways... As you'll read about in the Annual Performance Report, I began choosing trust when I commenced percentage giving. Priests don't get paid much, and while I'm certainly not in it for the money, I'd like to be able to enjoy my retirement when I reach 75. It was scary to commit myself to give by a weekly direct debit, and even scarier to trust God with a **known percentage** of my income. The fruit of those two choices though, has **been** and continues to **be** an incredible sense of liberation and freedom from attachment to money.

To each one of us, and even **to those** who might've already encounter Jesus in transformational ways – as Peter, James and John did on the mountain of Transfiguration – He says, *“Stand up, do not be afraid, and go, for what I will reveal to you is much greater than what it will cost you.”*

And so friends, we're invited into the same Abrahamic journey: to choose to stay where we are, or, *“relying on the power of God,”* to respond in trust and vulnerability like Abram, who *“went, as the Lord told him.”* Next week, I'll be wrapping up this two week series on sacrificial giving with a video homily at all parish Masses. I invite you to pray about your response to God's invitation over the next seven days. I don't expect you to respond because I'm asking; I expect you to respond because God is asking. May our response, like Abram's, become a blessing for us and a blessing for others. Amen.