

Benita and I have been catching up on Star Trek. Though neither of us were fans at an earlier age, for some reason we have, in the past year or so, been captivated by the series. It is an interesting film franchise, and there have been many, many shows based on it (original, next generation, deep space nine, voyageur, Enterprise (prequel), and 13(?) movies, as well as at least one cartoon series). Many of the shows, especially the earlier ones, were morality plays, examining concepts such as race, religion, conflict and peace, humanity. The basic premise is basically like Gulliver's Travels: it is about experiences and learnings while on a journey. The journey may be through space, through time, or through moral dilemmas – but the motif, the background, is always “the journey”.

In our first reading, we are introduced to Abram. Abram, or Abraham as we now know him, is about to go on a journey. He will leave his tribe and his homeland, and go – to where exactly he's not sure, but he knows its in the land of Canaan.

The Lord said to Abram: “Go.” Can you imagine doing what he did? What if the Lord tapped you on the shoulder and said “NNNNN, I want you to go to Baffin Island. I will bless you there, so take your immediate family, and go. I'll show you where you are to stay, when you get there.” What would you do?

Without questioning God (at least that we know of), Abram goes. Can you imagine that? I am sorry, but I am far too insecure. Sometimes when I get up in the morning I say “God, are you sure about this?”

Faith demands a radical response to the word of God. The life of faith is characterized as a journey. God calls, and we go forth in faith without a map, not quite sure of where we are going, but trusting God's promised presence. God speaks to Abram, and Abram takes his family along. Our acts of obedience are never isolated from the family and community to which we are attached. When I became a Priest, my wife and I left our parish of ~25 years, and we went to another one for a year – a parish that we did not know well, that we did not know the people well. When I was asked to come down here, I have had to leave my wife (for the most part) up in Fort McMurray while I am here – this is a cost! We find it very hard to be separated from each other, even for these brief days at a time. When we follow God in faith, it not only affects us, but those around us who we love.

It can be very hard and seem long and tiring, this journey of faith. The Israelites journeyed for 40 years on their exodus, a journey which should, by rights, have taken only 11 days. Eleven days! Jesus' journey to save us took his entire life – he had to give it all to save us, after living for only about 33 years.

It is easy for us to feel lost, unsure, tired, beaten, especially when we rely on our own strength, our own understanding.

Yet, we are reminded – the psalm reminds us very strongly: from where does our help come? (wait for answer). Our help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will keep our path safe, he will guard us night and day, is is our keeper. The LORD will keep us from all evil, and there is evil out there. He will keep our life. God assures us that we journey not alone, but with God, who leads us. His blessing includes what we all seek: a place to live and thrive, the security of community, prosperity, and prominence. These will not be acquired by our own doing, but received as gifts from God: divine grace, divine blessing.

We need this reminder, for our journey can seem long – it lasts our whole life, after all – and uncertain, and at times treacherous, and as I said, tiring. And confusing! You don't know how often I feel confused. In fact, it is *when I am sure of myself* that I think “okey doke David – be careful, you're missing something!”

Because we are not in charge. As much as we'd like to be – we are not in charge. All matters of salvation and righteousness are God's business: we have to let God do it His way. Abraham didn't get any say in the matter, and neither do we. Abraham had to let God work His will – and just like us, he messed up sometimes. This may be the hardest thing to practice, this trusting in God, this waiting for God, this loving God and our neighbour, no matter where we are in our journey. It is so hard! Because, we, to put it bluntly, are so blind. We do not know what God knows, we do not see what God sees, we can not think how God thinks. And so, we have to listen to the words of Jesus that were told to us today, very very carefully.

Jesus said to Nicodemus (and to us): "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above ... Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit... What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit." We cannot enter into God's kingdom of our own flesh, our own capabilities, our own desires, our own energy – we are not holy enough, righteous enough, humble enough, loving enough.

We need our old self to die, and to be born from above – born by infilling of the Holy Spirit, by infilling of God's grace, by baptism into God's love and majesty. Water is chaos and drowning and death – and water is thirst-quenching and revitalizing and life. We need baptism to drown our old way of trusting ourselves, and re-birth us into trusting God – which is only done with a relationship with the Father through Jesus, through the Holy Spirit of God. We are first born of the flesh, like any of the animals of earth – and we must be reborn of the Spirit, to truly become Images of God, Ambassadors of Christ, walkers of The Way of the Most High: Kingdom Walkers.

We must BELIEVE. Jesus continued to us: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." What if I were to tell you: our eternal life starts now? It does not start after we die – if we believe in Christ, it only continues after we die! It starts NOW! The difference between an eternal life and a non-eternal one is that in the eternal one, we agree to walk with God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We fully embrace that “God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” -- and we walk in the light, and invite others to walk in the light too.

The journey of our lives has even more distractions than what they show on the Star Trek shows. It has many, many things which would distract us from the way of Christ – and during this time of Lent, especially, we are gifted with being able to bring those, day by day, back to Christ and asking for forgiveness. We are gifted with being able to listen to the Lord, and follow Jesus. We are gifted with learning to not demand our own way, but to let go and follow Jesus' way.

And we, when we gave our life to Jesus, at that same time, Jesus gave Himself to us. He made your heart His home. Jesus has moved into you, and is ready to make you more and more the beloved disciple He created you as, one who is an Image of Him, an Image of God. So rejoice! God is willing to change us into who He designed us to be: that is what Jesus is talking about when He says we need to be reborn. You already have Jesus in your heart, so trust Him! And enjoy the journey, as He guides us all together. Let the Holy Spirit fill you. Amen!