Second Sunday of Lent, Year Three (Gen 15:5-12, 17-18; Phil 3:17-4:1; Luke 9:28b-36)

**MIRACLES IN STORE**

 What did Peter, James, and John think when Jesus led them up the mountain? Whatever they thought, the experience surely surpassed their expectations. For a brief moment, they glimpsed the truth about Jesus. They perceived his place within their faith tradition, including the mystery of his suffering.

 What happened on that mountain was an out-of-world experiences. It went beyond their capacity to understand. How to explain it? Was it real?

 After the vision vanished, they had to rely on the faith that says, "I know, though I don’t know how." They faced a basic challenge of faith: to believe in what was beyond them or cling to their concrete experience.

 By nature, faith is always a call to humility. It leads us beyond reasonable expectations and prods us toward the unknowable, including unpredictable transformation. The risk of that kind of faith sometimes seems too much for us.

 As Paul pointed out to the Philippians, we need models to show us the way. So, we turn to Abraham. Today, our father in faith invites us to revisit the scene in which God made Abraham the most extravagant promise imaginable.

 "Look up at those stars," said God. "Can you count them? Well, even if you could, they don't represent the future that I have in store for you and your descendants."

 But Abraham had a query: “I have no children."

 As we know from Genesis, that problem, so obvious and definitive to Abraham, was a minor detail for God. So what was Abraham to do? Today's reading says that he put his faith in God, and God counted it as an act of righteousness. Abraham gave God space to work with the emptiness in his life, and that was all God needed.

 The faith to which God calls us is no impressive intellectual undertaking but the human task of recognizing our littleness before our great and loving God. That's what the disciples learned on the mountaintop and why the Church teaches that the poor are privileged in this area.

 People who have always lived with the fact that they can't understand or control what happens can teach us if we are willing to learn. The faith-filled poor, a group that includes everyone who stands truly and humbly before God, are all around us.

 Look at the saints who run the soup kitchens, who, like Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa, rely more on God than on reserve funds. They do everything they can, they understand that it is not enough, then they laugh at hopelessness and set the table because they know the food will come.

 I suspect that such faith is like riding a bicycle -- no amount of theory suffices, only practice.

 Today's scriptural models offer us two approaches applicable to different moments in life.

 When we know our need far outstrips our possibilities, Abraham and the witnesses of contemporary miracles teach us to trust that God works in ways we can't imagine.

 When we don't know how to face the problem of suffering, when we wonder where God is, when our concept of God has proven too small, the disciples who came down the mountain in silence remind us that we can comprehend only a glimpse of the mystery of God's plan, and that it will always exceed our expectations.

 The call to faith is often an invitation to distrust our better judgment. It is always a call to let God be God, to expect more than is reasonable and not to bother trying to count the stars.

God has miracles in store for us.