



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I've preached on the first reading this weekend several times, but it always strikes me. We hear of this encounter between Abram (later Abraham) and the Lord God. When God called Abram out of his homeland to what today is Israel, he was already 75 years-old. Much time had passed between that day and today's reading. God says to him in a vision that He will make Abram's "reward very great" (Genesis 15:1), but Abram says, "Look, you have given me no offspring, so a servant of my household will be my heir" (Gen 15:3). Abram's concern is real, yet God is greater.

This is where today's first reading comes in as God takes Abram outside:

"Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so," he added, "shall your descendants be." Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. (Gen 15:5-6).

As I've mentioned before, this seems like God is making the promise that his descendants will be innumerable, because of the number of visible stars in this desert night sky. However, looking just a few short verses later, and we find, within this same conversation, that the sun begins to set (Gen 15: 12). This means that when God tells Abram to count the stars "if you can," it is daytime and he's saying that even though he can't see the stars, they are still there. He's inviting Abram to trust Him and His promise that Abram will have descendants despite his inability to see how. And Abram does put his faith in the Lord.

This is a call to us, as well. God invites us to trust. With the continuing effects of the COVID shut-downs, the supply-chain problems, the rising gas prices – all of which are made worse by the war in the Ukraine, which may bring other fears (potential WWIII, cyber-attacks from Russia, etc.) – not to mention our own individual sufferings and problems, we can be overwhelmed and filled with fear. But God invites us to trust in Him and His love... even if we can't see how God will bring about a good solution.

I often find that it is easy to lose track of the truth that we were not made for temporary existence – we were made to live forever! We were made for Heaven. We were made for eternal union with God, in love and joy and peace. In the midst of our problems, we can easily be led to fear, not trust. It can feel like our fear is clobbering our faith! St. Paul tells us, though, that "this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (II Corinthians 4:17). He reminds us that even if we cannot see the result, the afflictions of this life can be transformed into glory. In fact, the contrast between the two are a "*light* affliction" and a "*weight* of glory beyond comparison." While our affliction may seem like a great weight in this world, it is nothing, NOTHING, NOTHING compared to the glory that awaits us!

But do we trust? It all comes back to that. Do we trust that God is with us? Even if our way of living is permanently altered, God is with us. Even if World War III happens, God is with us. Even if we die, God is with us. Do we have the trust to see that the stars are there, even in the daylight? Do we have trust that God's plan will still be fulfilled even when we're surrounded by evils?

Let us pray that we, like Abram, may become daytime star-gazers.