We find true and abiding life in Jesus.

- In today’s gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that he will endure hard times—even death upon the cross.
- We tell today’s gospel to young children, but focus on the Old Testament figures of Abraham and Sarah, who, like Jesus, listened to God’s voice—and obeyed.
- In today’s session we also continue to explore the season of Lent.

Question of the Week

What times of transformation have I experienced? How have I changed?
Getting Started (10-15 minutes)
Introduce children to the person Abraham with story figures and songs. Explain:
◆ Sarah was a woman who loved God.
◆ Her husband, Abraham, was a man who loved God.
◆ Today we are going to sing songs, tell stories and play games about Sarah and Abraham.

You may choose to begin and end today’s storytelling with the Story-Review Song on page 3.

Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)
Jesus and His Friends
Story Focus: You can use a plain, undecorated cross made in the Prayer Corner Craft activity above as a focal point for today’s story.

“Come with me, Peter,” says Jesus. “Come with me, James and John.”

Jesus and his friends climb up a high mountain. But something amazing happens.

“Look!” says John. “Look at Jesus!”

“His clothes are shining! What is happening?” says James.

“Jesus, how good it is to be here with you!” says Peter. “Let us stay here forever.”

But a voice comes from a thick cloud. “This is my own dear Son. Listen to him.”

Now Jesus looks the way he always does. He says, “We must go back. I have work to do.”

“What work, Jesus?” asks John.

“Hard work,” says Jesus. “Sad times are coming.”

Jesus’ friends do not know it yet, but Jesus would soon die on a cross.

James says, “We will help you with your hard work.”

“We will help you with your sad times,” says Peter.

And the four friends climb back down the mountain.

Game (10-25 minutes)
Children of Abraham and Sarah
Children play a variation of Sardines that affirms their spiritual descent from Sarah and Abraham.

Ask one volunteer to be the first child of Abraham. As the other children cover their eyes, this child takes the star and hides somewhere in the room.

At your signal the other children look for the child. Anyone who finds the child becomes another child of Abraham and squeezes next to the first child, not telling that the child has been found. Play continues until all the children of Abraham are squeezed together in the same hiding place.

If you don’t have enough room for this game, substitute a game of Musical Chairs, with these variations:
◆ All children who are seated are children of Abraham.
◆ No one gets left out. As chairs are removed, children pile onto one another’s laps.
◆ At the end of the game, all the children of Abraham are seated on one chair together!

Repeat the game, using the name Sarah instead of Abraham.

Praying Together (5 minutes)
Remind children that we are in Lent, a time of purple—and prayer. As in the session for the 1st Sunday of Lent, invite the children to make a prayer corner. Help them decorate the corner with purple cloths, an open Bible and perhaps the crosses made in today’s Craft activity. Children can also add flowers, candles, bells or pictures.

Sit with the children in the prayer corner. If you are using candles, consider leaving them unlit since some children are sensitive to the smoke from candles. Pray:
◆ Thank you, God, for Father Abraham and Mother Sarah.
◆ Thank you, God, for our friend, Jesus.
◆ Thank you, God, for so many things. (Invite children to add their own thanksgivings to the prayer.)
◆ Thank you, God, for (name each child individually). Amen.

Invite children to take their decorated crosses home.

Note: Distribute this week’s Discover the Good News to children before they leave, or e-mail it to their parents after the session.
Discover the Good News
(5-10 minutes)
In today’s Discover the Good News you’ll find an activity called “Stars in the Sky.” Invite children to name children of Abraham and Sarah as they touch the stars. They can begin by naming each child in the group.

You’ll also find a detail (Saints Attinea and Gracianina) from a beautiful painting called Christ in Glory by Domenico Ghirlandaio. Invite children to talk about what they see in the picture. Discuss:
◆ Imagine God asks you to travel to a new land—one of the places in this picture.
◆ Where would you go?
◆ What could we see there?

Singing Together
(5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News you and the children can sing together:
◆ “God Makes Promises” (p. 28 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)
◆ “Friends with God” (p. 32 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Spring-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

Story-Review Game
(10-15 minutes)
Mother, May I?
Children play a variation of Mother, May I? in this story-review game about Abraham and Sarah.

One child plays the part of Sarah (or Abraham) who obeys and gathers many children. Explain that the word obey means to do as you are told. Explain:
◆ In today’s story, Sarah and Abraham obeyed God.
◆ God told Sarah and Abraham to go to a new land.
◆ Sarah and Abraham obeyed God.

Invite the children to line up against one wall. Several feet from the opposite wall, make a finish line with chalk or tape. Stand behind the finish line.

Choose one child to begin as Sarah. Give Sarah simple moving instructions such as:
◆ Sarah, obey me and take three giant steps.
◆ Sarah, obey me and take two baby steps.

Sarah must answer, “I obey!” before moving. When Sarah remembers to say, “I obey!” say, “Because you obey, I give you two (or three or more) children.” The number of children named join Sarah and move with him or her, using the same steps as Sarah.

If Sarah forgets to say, “I obey!” she or he and all the children with him or her go back to the starting line. Pick a new Sarah and start again. Time the movements so that all children in the group cross the finish line together as Sarah and her children! Repeat the game with one child playing the part of Abraham.

Story-Review Song
(10-15 minutes)
Abraham, My Lord
Teach the children to sing this song to the tune of “Kum ba Yah”:

Abraham, my Lord, Abraham
Abraham, my Lord, Abraham
Abraham, my Lord, Abraham
Oh, Lord, Abraham.
Sarah loved you, Lord, yes, she did.
Sarah loved you, Lord, yes, she did.
Sarah loved you, Lord, yes, she did.
Oh, Lord, yes, she did.
Were their children, Lord, yes, we are.
Were their children, Lord, yes, we are.
Were their children, Lord, yes, we are.
Oh, Lord, yes, we are.

Children can also sing this traditional spiritual:

Oh, rock-a-my soul in the bosom of Abraham,
Rock-a-my soul in the bosom of Abraham,
Rock-a-my soul in the bosom of Abraham,
Oh, rock-a-my soul.

You can vary the lyrics to include Sarah:

Oh, rock-a-my soul, with Sarah and Abraham (etc.)
Journey Chart (10-15 minutes)

A familiar metaphor for Lent is that of a journey. We make this metaphor concrete for preschoolers and kindergartners by introducing a Journey Chart that will be used in the sessions of Lent and Easter. Throughout the season, children can add stickers to the chart. Find directions and sticker-page templates for this and other Journey Chart activities (in weeks to come) attached to this document.

Find and print the Journey Chart attached to this document.

Post the Chart at children’s eye level. Explain:
- This is our Journey Chart. What do you see in the picture? (Encourage several answers. If necessary point out the road.)
- We can pretend we are traveling together on this road.
- Each time we do a project together, we will add stickers to this chart.
- We have already done today’s project—we have listened to a story together. Because we listened so carefully together, we can each put a sticker on the chart.

Help each child choose a sticker to add to the chart. Save the finished chart to use in future sessions.

INFO Young Children and the Lectionary

In Lent, we explore several Old Testament stories especially appropriate, both to the season and to the interests of young children.

Today’s session for the 2nd Sunday of Lent introduces children to the Old Testament heroes Abraham and Sarah, our ancestors of faith.

INFO Where You’ll Find Everything Else

- Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled More about Today’s Scriptures.
  - A handout with a child friendly rendition of today’s Gospel Story: Jesus and His Friends.
  - Directions for a Prayer-Corner Craft about crosses.
  - The Journey Chart to be used in the activity of the same name.
  - Three documents needed for the Journey Chart activity: Boy Girl Stickers, Jesus Stickers and Using Sticker Sheets.
  - This week’s At Home with the Good News, to distribute or email to group members after the session.

- Open your Spring-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Seasonal Articles to find:
  - Information on Spring-B’s Models of the Faith.
  - For catechists and/or families, an article titled Season of Lent.
  - For catechists and/or families, an article titled Covenants.
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings call us to trust in God’s faithfulness. In Genesis, God affirms his faithfulness to Abraham. Paul assures the Romans that God is totally and absolutely “for us.” In the gospel account of the transfiguration, Elijah, Moses—and the voice of God—endorse the completeness of God’s revelation in Jesus.

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18
The account of Isaac’s offering comes as the climax of the story of Abraham’s relationship with God. At God’s command, Abraham has already cut himself off from his past, from country and family, and retains only the promise of new status. Now God commands him to cut off his future by killing the heir of the promise, his beloved son Isaac—and no new promise is given.

The story is simply told, without direct expression of the thoughts or feelings of the participants. Its power comes from the events and relationships themselves. The story centers upon the exemplary faith of Abraham and the God-tested strength of the bond between God and Abraham.

Abraham demonstrates his faithfulness by his readiness to act in obedience, trusting in God’s faithfulness to the promise instead of trying to take matters into his own hands to make God’s plans work out.

Romans 8:31b-34
Today’s reading, cast in the form of a public debate, uses ironic questions and parallel phrases. Paul assures the Roman Christians that they have nothing to fear, for Christ’s crucifixion shows the extent of God’s love toward all believers. God and Christ are “for us” (v. 31). No other authority or force can separate the Christian from God.

In verse 31, Paul refers to Psalm 118:6 and then alludes, by his choice of words, to Abraham’s offering of Isaac as a reflection of God’s offering. For Paul, Psalm 44:22, applied by the rabbis to Jewish martyrs, showed that suffering was the Christian’s lot.

Mark 9:2-10
Commentators have interpreted the account of Christ’s transfiguration from a variety of perspectives—from a straightforward report to the narrative of a vision or a mystical experience elaborated by symbolism. Mark’s account is strongly shaped by references to the appearance of God to Moses on Mount Sinai, which likewise was in a cloud on a mountain after “six days” (Exodus 24:15-18). Moses was also transfigured in Exodus 34:29-35.

The divine voice from the cloud repeats the statement made at Jesus’ baptism (1:11) with the addition of the command “listen to him” (v. 7). As Moses represents the tradition of the Torah, the law, so Elijah represents the prophetic tradition. Both appear with Jesus and then disappear, leaving “only Jesus” (v. 8).

The booths that Peter proposes to build would be like those built in the vineyards at the time of the Feast of Booths (Succoth), the Jewish festival associated at this time with the yearly renewal of the covenant. On the day of salvation, the Lord would again dwell in the midst of the people. But since this time has not yet come, Jesus enjoins the disciples to silence.

The disciples have seen Jesus for a moment in the light in which the Church will see him after the resurrection, but the true nature of the Son of Man would be misunderstood if he were seen only as a divinely acclaimed miracle-worker. Only the crucifixion and resurrection of the suffering Son will reveal the truth.

Reflection

We all have our moments. Our clothes may not be radiant, and we may not chat with prophets. But we know the times when we feel most fully like God’s children.

Those experiences will vary: for some, it is the profound touch of music or art. For others, it’s the first sight and embrace of a beloved friend or relative after a long separation. Still others might find fulfillment in social service, worship or nature. Liberation from confinement, whether at school or work, can also lift us beyond the ordinary drudgery. At such times, we know we are at our best. We co-create our identities with God; human and divine delight in each other.

It’s tempting to try to prolong the experience, as Peter did. We dread a long trek down the mountain afterwards, but we have had the vision, setting the
benchmark for everything else. We work towards it again and again, eventually arriving at the final moments, when as poet Jean Mambrino says,

You feel the quickening as your body fails.
Something quite other will be its splendid sweetness.
Behind your bodily eyes you will see its glory burning.

The Scriptures and the Catechism

Today we learn how God tests Abraham’s fidelity. Having been promised covenant blessings through his only son Isaac, Abraham is now told to sacrifice his son. Against all natural human love for his son (CCC, #2214–2233) and legal prohibitions against murder (CCC, #2258–2330), Abraham undertakes the awful process of killing his son to show how willing he is to do whatever God asks. God responds by saving Isaac and promising again that blessings will come from the covenant relationship. Our fidelity to God’s demands will “transfigure” our lives as it does Abraham’s.

Liturgy Link

Postures of Prayer

In the synagogues, the reader and the congregation stood for the reading of the Torah. Similarly, in early Christian worship, the people stood for the reading of the gospel.

Sitting was the posture for teaching in the synagogue and early Church. The bishop sat on his chair, as the representative of God enthroned, and preached the tradition—the faith. Everyone else, except those especially weak, stood through the entire service. This custom continues today in Orthodox churches in Europe and the Middle East.

“The Lord professes himself to be the Son of Man, comprising in himself the first man...so that through a victorious man we may rise again to life, just as through a vanquished man our human race descended into death.”
—St. Irenaeus of Lyons

But this title also takes on a particularly important meaning for Christians because the prophet Daniel (7:13) describes God’s final agent, to whom all power is given to accomplish God’s rule in the world, as a “son of man.”

Jesus also adds further meanings by connecting the Son of Man both with the suffering that is part of his messianic task and with the forgiveness of sins, which only God could do. Thus the title could point to him as just another human person, or as the suffering, sin-forgiving savior or, finally, as God’s final triumphant figure brandishing the power of God for the kingdom.

“Prayer is nothing else than union with God. When our heart is pure and united to God, we feel within ourselves a joy, a sweetness that inebriates, a light that dazzles us. It is a happiness that we cannot understand.”
—St. John Vianney, the Curé of Ars

The normal Jewish posture for public prayer was standing with hands and face uplifted. Pictures in the catacombs indicate that this posture was also used by the early Christians. This posture, called orans (Latin for “praying”), came to be seen as the posture of resurrection, for those made worthy to stand before the Lord through baptism.

Kneeling was associated with pagan cults, and the early Church avoided it and used it only for private prayer and for public penitents. The Council of Nicaea in AD 325 forbade kneeling for prayer on Sundays and during the entire Easter season.

In late medieval times, a predominantly penitential approach to the Eucharist became common, and the laity then knelt for the entire service. The orans posture was retained only for the celebrant.

The World of the Bible

Son of Man

In Semitic languages, when connected to a collective noun, “son of” designates the individual member belonging to a group. Thus a son of man means a human person, especially in contrast to God, and so can mean “someone,” “anyone” or even be an indirect way of referring to “I myself” or “me.”