

GROWING Together

13th Series

ABRAHAM

All peoples on earth will be blessed through you (Gen 12:3).

In a way there are three Abrahams. Christianity, Judaism and Islam all honour Abraham as a man of faith, a man who walked with God. This makes Abraham a link binding the three Faiths together. But he also separates us. Our stories about him differ in details and emphases. There is enough in common that we form the “family of Abraham;” there is enough difference that we travel on unique religious paths.

Abraham’s understanding of God developed as he wandered and tented. Similarly the understanding each person and each religious community have of God undergoes development.

In Exodus 3:6 God says to Moses: “*Say to the Israelites: the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob has sent me to you.*” The ancient rabbis were asked why this repetition, why not simply say “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Upon reflection, they answered that the God of Jacob is not exactly the God of Isaac, and the God of Isaac is not exactly the God of Abraham. While building on the insights of the past, each generation has the task of coming to know God for itself.

SEEKER

On two occasions God said to Abraham: “*Lek, leka.*” The rabbis translated this strange Hebrew wording as “Go, go to yourself.” Abraham was asked to go out in search of God’s promises; he was also asked to go within to search for the God of the promises. The first occasion meant giving up his past (Gen 12:1); the second, his future (Gen 22:2). Abraham, the man of faith, was being called to seek God, and only God.

PILGRIM

Abraham was a tent-dweller. He wandered, journeying as a pilgrim. To be a pilgrim is to keep the final goal in mind and to travel light. Living a life of simplicity and detachment, Abraham was able to remain faithful to his vision.

HOST

In Genesis 12 we read of Abraham’s wonderful example of hospitality to the stranger. He considered it an honour to be able to serve and to share. His generosity invites us to open up the tent flaps of our hearts to welcome all those we meet. It is said: “Dialogue begins when people meet.”

FRIEND

God favoured Abraham with a special relationship. The holy books of Christianity, Judaism and Islam call Abraham “the friend of God.” In the New Testament we read: “... *he was called God’s friend?*” (Jas 2:23); in the Torah: “*Abraham, thy friend forever?*” (2 Chr 20:7); in the Qur’an, “... *for God took Abraham for a friend?*” (4:125).

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God spoke to Abraham, promising to make of him a blessing to the nations. God also speaks to us, the children of Abraham. Can we now speak with one another so that through us the world may experience God’s blessings?

ABRAHAMIC LITANY

- LEADER:** Abraham, the seeker, looked beyond creation to the Creator.
ALL: Help us, O God, — Christians, Jews, and Muslims — to be seekers.
- LEADER:** Abraham, the pilgrim, set out on a journey of faith at God’s command.
ALL: Help us, O God, — Christians, Jews, and Muslims — to be pilgrims.
- LEADER:** Abraham, the host, ran from his tent to welcome strangers on the road.
ALL: Help us, O God, — Christians, Jews, and Muslims — to be hospitable.
- LEADER:** Abraham, the “friend of God,” became a partner with God in a covenant of perpetual friendship.
ALL: Help us, O God, — Christians, Jews, and Muslims — to be Your friend and friends of all Your people.

GROWING TOGETHER is a series of five monthly Sunday bulletin inserts for the ecumenical education of Christ’s faithful.



Gathering the Family of Jesus

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