

**Lectionary readings: Genesis 12: 1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4: 1-5, 13-17; John 3: 1-17 (2nd Sunday in Lent)**

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Genesis 12:** Abram believed God was calling him into the great unknown, and he responded in faith, risking all. If only it was as easy to hear the voice of God and know His will, we might be thinking. But we don't know the agony, the inner turmoil, the doubts, the questioning that went on in Abram before he made this decision. It would have been tempting, I'm sure, for Abram to remain where he was - familiar, safe, comfortable. Rather like us really - safer to stay with what we know than face the challenge of uprooting ourselves from our comfort zone and daring to launch out into deep waters, not knowing how things will work out. I can think of decisions I have made - all of them for me into uncharted waters, but trusting that God would be with me. But these decisions were made after much prayer, inner turmoil, self-doubt, times of fear. I learned a lot about myself in the process, but the risk of moving into unknown territory resulted in blessing, and sometimes pain. How do you make decisions and work out how God is leading you?
- **Psalm 121:** This is a Psalm dear to the hearts of many people that has brought comfort, strength and hope. *'My help comes from the Lord .... The Lord Himself watches over you .... The Lord stands beside you .... May you keep us in our going out and our coming in...'* In all our comings and goings this week, Lord, may we be conscious of Your presence with us wherever we go.

- **Romans 4:** God is a God of love, but many people today find that difficult to believe and think they have to try to earn favour with God, almost, as it were, entering into a business deal with God: I'll do these good deeds, go through these rituals and God will reward me. God offers Himself to us as a free gift out of love - just as He did to Abraham. And God invites us to respond in faith to His deep love for us, for He wants to bless each one of us richly. It may be good for us this week to reflect again on what kind of God we believe in and to hear His invitation to us to open our hearts to Him who has first opened His heart to us.
- **John 3:** Nicodemus was a respected rabbi who probably thought he had all the answers, but he obviously recognised in Jesus a rabbi very different, whose teaching was new and radical, inviting people to open themselves up to God in a new way, to be led into a deeper dimension of living. Are we content only to dip our toes into the waters of religion? Or are we willing to launch out into deep waters and to be led on an amazing journey of faith and discovery?

**A prayer**

*Life is a journey, but God is always with us. Sometimes we lift our faces to the sun, and God is with us. But then there is the hard journey through pathways of pain and fears in dark places, but God is with us. O God, who travels with us in the shadows, You know who we are. We long for the life that is full and free. We long to know the truth, and we want to leave behind us all the things which hold us back. We want to move forward in faith, but the way seems so dangerous and we stand in helpless fear before that which is hidden in our past and in our future. Stand beside us ... walk before us ... call us on into life. Amen.*

(Dorothy McRae-McMahon)