



*«I will bless you ... you will be a
blessing ... » (Gn 12, 2-3)*



The promise made to Abraham

SPIRITUAL RETREAT

N° 3 - 2018

***"I will make you a great nation, and
I will bless you, and I will make your
name great and
you will be a blessing... "***
(Gn 12, 2-3)

INTRODUCTION

The spiritual retreat is a time to take a break, a time to talk heart to heart with the God and Lord. But it is also a time of renovation, a time where we dare to leave again with God. In this way, Abram is a model. Indeed, the Abram's history is the history of a new beginning, a new restructuring of his life and existence, of his mission and his project. This experience of Abram can be found from Gen 12 to Gen 22.

In this first part of the day of the spiritual retreat, the history of Abram begins with his calling to leave: from his country, from his family and house of his father to go toward the unknown, a place which only God knows. Abram does not know where will pass through to get there, but the Lord assures that He will show the country. Abram complied with. It is striking seeing Abram that, after a life full of joys and pains, ups and downs, without a progeny, has to start over a new life. The contrast of this new life is between the unknown of the Abram and the Blessing of the God. To live this contrast, Abram believed in God. For this reason he became not only the father of the Faith but also the father of a great nation.

In Abram's history, faith and obedience are closely linked and interpellate each other. There is not the one without the other, so that we can say the *obedience of the faith* and *the faith of obedience*.

To start over, to give new life to our existence, we need of faith and obedience. Obedience to the blow of the Spirit, and faith to the guide of the Spirit. To link these two essential elements, in any person who want to start over under the guide of the Spirit, we have to take into consideration three aspects. These three aspects go through the history of Abram in the passage we choose for this day (from Gen 12 to Gen 22).

These three aspects are:

1. The history,
2. The itinerary,
3. The promise,

The history refers to the vertical relationship Father-Son. The itinerary deals with the geographical journeys of Abram, but this journey are not less spiritual. The promise gives the base of Abram's identity as a father of the nation and faith, starting a future full of God's Blessings. These three aspects of Abram's history, between obedience and faith, will be the three sessions of the spiritual retreat:

1. First session

THE HISTORY OF ABRAM AND OUR HISTORY: «Leave your country, your people and your father's home...».(Gen 12, 1a)

2. Second session

THE ITINERARY OF ABRAM AND OUR ITINERARY: "go to the country that I will show you" (Gn 12, 1b)

3. Third session

PROMISE MADE TO ABRAM AND THE PROMISE MADE BY GOD TO US: "I am going to make yourself a great nation, I will bless you, I will make great your name and will be a blessing»."

(Gen. 12, 2-3).

SPIRITUAL RETREAT N ° 3

OUR THIRD SPIRITUAL RETREAT WILL BE ABOUT THE PROMISE MADE BY GOD TO ABRAHAM

"I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great and you will be a blessing... "(Gen. 12, 2-3).

Our third spiritual retreat will be about the promise made by God to Abraham: "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse thee; And all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you "(Gen. 12, 2-3).

But through this promise from God to Abraham, how can we look to the future? What is God's promise to us today if we accept, like Abraham, to leave our security and our love to embrace a future in which we have no withholding? Before you meditate on this, you need to make a useful return.

A useful return: take stock

As a time when we retire to the side to speak from heart to heart with the Lord, the Spiritual retreat aims, among other things, a spiritual and apostolic renewal. The initiative of the three series of meditation on the history of Abraham is in the same perspective. It aims at this spiritual and apostolic renewal, not only on a personal level but also at the level of the whole Institute. In fact, new challenges are looming on the horizon and we cannot face this without this retreat in order to restart anew with Christ in our hearts. It's really a renewal of our identity.

In the first session of our series spiritual retreats, we have meditated first on the story of Abraham: "*Leave your country, your kinship and your father's house* " (Gen 12, 1a). This account of Abraham referred us to a set of facts in his life. He was a very human man. He lived up to 75 years without a son in his country until one day; he left his country and his father's house, for a destiny he did not know. This is the beginning of an adventure. Abraham will lose his family ties. Worse, he'll lose his identity. ***Abram will be called Abraham.*** You will know different people, situations and living

environments. Abraham will have two sons, one of an "illegitimate union" (Ishmael) and the other of a "lawful Union" (ISAAC). And it will even reach the threshold of ISAAC's sacrifice. It is not by madness that Abraham lived the vicissitudes of his narrative. He did not leave his country voluntarily. He did not lose his relationships and identity in a blow of anger or self-esteem. He did not live the different encounters, situations, etc., by a simple leap of humor. The story of Abraham is a rereading of a people of faith. And he who speaks of a people of faith speaks of a community for which God has the initiative of the whole story and the whole of history. That looks of faith changes everything. Go to Abraham's departure from his father's house a call from God. Such is the beginning of a holy story, a story of faith and obedience, which will lead Abraham to adventure in adventure. He will have Ishmael, then Isaac, the son of promise. His faith in God is so strong that, at his request, Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac. To what extent are we willing to sacrifice ourselves for God?

The Holy History of Abraham has been the springboard for rereading our narrative of personal vocation and of the institute akin to seeing a sacred history. Have we been able to see our history with faith? I mean, as God has guided us to this day. As, graces to faith, we were able to obey the breath of the spirit. The grace to ask during this first spiritual retreat was the ***glance of faith in our history***. It is a matter of seeing and recognizing how we have been faithful or obedient to the Holy Spirit.

In effect, obedience to the Spirit refers to faith in a promise that we feel comes from God. And, in fact, this promise is already well enshrined in the very interior of our vocation. But to reach the full manifestation or fulfillment of the promise, the Lord makes us move from one spiritual place to another. Such was the theme **of the second spiritual retreat: *the itinerary***.

In the second session, we contemplate Abraham's itinerary: "... go to the country I'm going to show you" (Gen 12, 1b). We have contemplated Abraham in his geographical displacement. These movements have certainly made us reread the history of Abraham. But even more, by our gaze of faith, we have discovered that beyond a simple geographical displacement, Abraham has lived a spiritual journey going not only from one spiritual place to another, but from one spiritual relationship to

another, from one inner motion to another. These contemplations have helped us to deepen our spiritual gaze on our own history and the history of our Institute. In fact, coming back to us, we have tried to put the same look of faith in our own history and that of our institute. And we have recognized God working in history, in our history. We have recognized God to the work in us and in our surroundings. We have recognized in these places where we have gone, in the relationships that we have woven, maintained or neglected, God was there. We have seen God in these inner motions that we have lived. "**God was there!**" Sometimes we knew, sometimes we didn't. The grace sought was to see and recognize the presence of God during the important moments of our history: ***the places where we pass, the people we met, the situations or experiences lived, etc.***

Of all that has been meditated and contemplated in the first and second session of our spiritual retreats, one can slowly realize that God's promise to Abraham is not outside the story of his own life or his own itinerary. It is in the very interior of this story and of this itinerary of Abraham that it is woven, refined, expressed, perfected and fulfilled (realized) the promise. But what (which) is finally this promise?

So we're in the last series of our spiritual retreats.

The promise of Abraham and our promise

As God calls Abraham to leave everything to go after him, the promise he makes is quite clear: "I will make you a great nation (...) In you will be blessed all the people of the Earth "(Gen 12, 2-3). In this repeated promise of many forms in the history of Abraham, two elements are repeated: descent and Earth. These are the constituent elements of a human person's identity. Without a people who unite, without a land, the human being seems lost and without milestones. The people (offspring) refer to a community of faith that gives us an identity. The Earth, it is the place of birth. That place can also be spiritual (a meeting, a spiritual experience to the inner of a spirituality, etc.). In the perspective in which we are, the look is oriented towards the future. Do you promise a descent? A land to live in? In short, a security of our identity?

These questions are legitimate. But one thing seems clear to Abraham. It is not so much because the Lord has promised him offspring and land that

he left. He left because the Lord called him: "... **go to the country that I will show you...**". In the face of the unknown, only faith was the light that guided Abraham. This is tantamount to saying that Abraham responded to God's call because the only promise Abraham believed was his **presence from God**. From Abraham, this promise has gone through history. It's been woven, refined. Has been expressed and perfected. And finally, it was realized in fullness with the incarnation of Emmanuel, God with us. Moreover, Christ when, after the resurrection, when he came out of this world he will say to his disciples: "And I am with you every day until the end of Time" (Mt 28, 20).

During our spiritual process in the course of this spiritual experience, one of the graces that can guide us and see if beyond our choices, feelings and desires we have the firm conviction of the presence of the Lord. If this conviction is there, the accent will no longer be put in any certainty but in the Lord alone, he is our only inheritance.

PERSONAL PRAYER

Gn 12, 1-3: Abraham's vocation

Ask the Lord to remind me of the promise he made me

Reread Abraham's vocation at the same time as reread mine. How, as to Abraham, God has asked me to leave my country, or my father's house, to consecrate myself to him. What was the promise that was manifested in this vocation? How is this promise manifested today?

Reflect and take advantage of it

Gn 15: The Divine promises and the Covenant

Asks the grace to recognize the terms of the Lord's promise to me today.

Meditate on the characters: God and Abraham. Listen to what they say, the discussion they have together. Be there as a witness of the scene. Put yourself in God's place: try to feel your feelings in front of Abraham. Then get into Abraham's feelings: try to consider the conversation as if we were talking to God. Let the motions arise in us: desires? Fears? Joy? ...

Reflect and take advantage of it

Gn 22, 1-19

Ask the grace to be ready for any sacrifice as Abraham

It's a matter of watching the scene.

Look at the characters: to see Abraham before God who makes him an unimaginable request. See how she commits without saying a word. Consider the way he travels with his son Isaac to the place of sacrifice.

See Isaac; imagine what may be his conversation with his father while they are making way

Listen to what they say. Listening to God turning to Abraham. Listen to the conversation of Isaac and his father. Listening to the intervening angel.

See the places: the house where Abraham and Isaac came from, the place of sacrifice, etc.

Each time, return to self and consider that this am I contemplating or meditating my concerns (impact) personally, or how it reaches the congregation as a whole.

Reflect and take advantage of it

SPIRITUAL READING

Gn 12

Gn 21

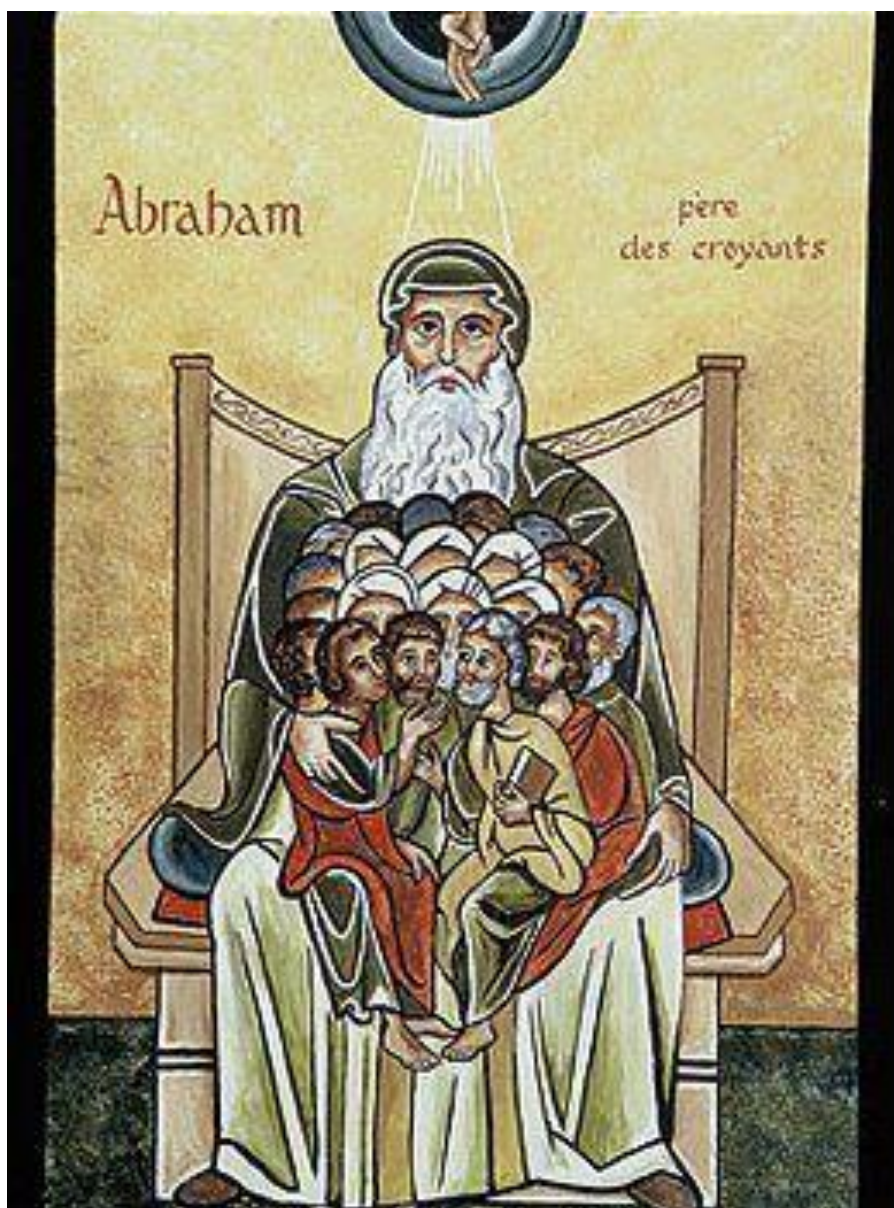
Gn 22

FOR A PERSONAL REFLECTION FROM ABRAHAM

Does God make me a new promise or is it the same promise that is expressed in another way?

What are the terms with which God today expresses the promise he makes to me?

To the future, what are my joys and my fears? My questions and my certainties?
Before the future, is the conviction of the presence of the Lord a certainty (guarantee) for me?



To accompany our days: (text annexes)

- **TO LISTEN FATHER BENEDICT MENNI**
- **TO LISTEN OUR FIRST SISTERS**
- **TO LISTEN SAINT AGUSTINE**
- **TO LISTEN MOTHER MONIQUE**
- **TO LISTEN TO THE SISTERS WHO PRECEDED US (In each Province there are sisters that for us and for others they crosses their journeys giving witness as Hospitallers of God)**



"Africa, keep the lamp of hospitality alight"