

THROUGH CHILDREN'S EYES: SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Lent is a journey from the dark remnants of Ashes to the glorious resurrection of Easter. It is a journey. On the Second Sunday of Lent our artist's work is based on the first traceable steps of our Christian faith. Abram and Sarai set out from Ur, a land based on polytheism. They are looking for something more cohesive and simpler - a unified field theory for religion – and they find monotheism.

For this exciting discovery and unexpected encounter between humanity and the One God, Anna, aged 8 has drawn us a complex travel landscape. Abram and Sarai (later re-named by God as Abraham and Sarah) are not alone. They may have left their extended family and tribal clan behind in Ur but they have left with all their personal wealth – their camels, herds of cattle, sheep, goats, and domesticated birds.

Abram and Sarai come from the Euphrates River Valley. Ur was a bustling wealthy city within Chaldea, the southernmost portion of ancient Sumer in Mesopotamia. This is an old culture indeed. Archaeologists have discovered evidence of occupation at Ur during the Ubaid period (ca. 6500 to 3800 BC). The great Ziggurat which generated the Tower of Babel of the Bible's Book of Genesis was in ancient Ur over 4,000 years ago. Ur was an important city during the emergence of the Bronze Age. Most of all of Western Civilization comes from the culture of this region.

And despite all this Urban wealth, sophistication and cultural richness, Abram and Sarai were not satisfied with their life and faith in this land of the moon god, Sin, and the Ur city god, Nanna.

Anna has drawn for us the journey of the exodus. Abram and Sarai are with their animals but one can't tell if their encounter with God taken place or is about to do so. Or can we? Perhaps we can tell by the open smile on their faces. They are not travelling in disillusionment but with assured safety and contentment. It would appear their epiphany has entered into their reality.

Or maybe Anna has merely captured that Abram and Sarai have just finished a wonderful BBQ breakfast.

Here is the age appropriate translation of the gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent:

21 FEBRUARY – 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

One of the earliest faithful people that we know about, who lived even long before Jesus was born, was the prophet Abraham. Before Abraham's time people worshiped clay and stone statues, but Abraham realized there was only one God. And so Abraham left his home to journey to find God.

He was travelling through the desert with his wife Sarah. They had a camel to carry all their baggage and they walked beside it or they would take turns riding on top of it. The camel was the type with one big hump and it was very strong and could walk for days and days without any problem. They were also herding some sheep, goats and cattle with them.

Abraham and Sarah were sad since they didn't have any children.

One night in a dream, Abraham heard God's voice. God said, "Abraham I am very happy that you want to know me better. You will be the father of my followers and I will be their God."

Abraham was surprised and puzzled. How can I be the father of anyone? Sarah and I have no children and now we are too old?"

God said, "Look up into the night sky. Do you see all the stars there? You will have more children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren more than all those stars and more than all the grains of sand in the desert." After that, Abraham woke up from his dream.

Abraham was excited about this news and he wanted to give God a present. He decided that he would sacrifice one of his animals and burn the meat. He thought that God would like the smell of roasting dinner and that the smoke would carry the gift up into heaven. God just chuckled at this. God didn't need any animals. Didn't Abraham know that God made ALL the animals... they were already his.

But then Abraham didn't know which animal to give to God, so he decided to give one of each type. He barbequed a young cow, one of his older and stronger sheep, a strong and meaty goat, a large bird like a chicken and a smaller bird like a dove. He roasted them all. After a while some desert birds came and tried to eat some of the barbeque, but Abraham ran around the food waving his arms and shoed them away. Eventually Abraham fell asleep again and slept by the meat and dreamed that God was happy with his gift.

In the morning, Sarah woke up to find this huge breakfast all made by Abraham. She was very happy and they invited some passers-by to join them as they had a special feast of roasted delicious meats.

