

02/21/16 2 Lent C

-- This past week I saw an amazing “in the womb” photo of twins who seemed to be holding each other’s hands. Since they were a boy and a girl that wasn’t literally possible (two different amniotic sacs), but they clearly looked like they were reaching out to each other.

-- And their mother was aware of their presence, even though they could not see her surrounding them. Her love was certainly there for both of them, including the one twin who, sadly, is not expected to survive due to brain and heart defects.

-- God’s presence with us is much like that mother is present for her children in the womb. It surrounds us so closely that we can’t see it directly. In the end, we will only grasp it fully when we leave the womb of this earthly existence.

-- Still, we want assurance of God’s presence. Abram wanted that. God had twice promised him that he would be with him and his people. He promised him, an old man yet childless, numerous descendants.

-- Abram put his faith in God, but he still wanted some assurance from Him. So we have this account in our first reading of his nighttime vision of God coming to him in fire.

-- We Westerners are suspicious of visionaries, and sometimes with good reason. But for people of Abram’s culture (and Middle Easterners even today), this type of “out of body” experience is not that unusual. And we would be mistaken to dismiss it out of hand.

-- Even with this special vision, Abram had to take God’s word on faith. And so did the disciples who experienced Jesus’ transfiguration as they had their own “out of body” event. They wanted to cling to this glorious event, but it passed from them. And they could not share it with others until Jesus was raised.

-- Yes, we are surrounded by God's presence so closely that it's hard to see. Perhaps some of us have had experiences almost like those of Abram and the apostles when God's presence became intense.

-- I would suspect most of us have not had quite that intense of an experience. But, if we try to be attentive to God's presence, we have had indications and signs that God is with us, even if those signs are subtle.

-- Sometimes it comes in circumstances others would consider simply coincidence but, from the point of view of faith, show us God's presence. I remember a particular event like that which occurred last year.

-- Other times, it may come through some remark or piece of advice someone gives us or to someone close to us. God can speak through many mouths.

-- Perhaps our attitude ought to be that of the psalmist today. He sings to the Lord, *Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks...Hide not your face from me.*

-- Like those disciples, we may only get a glance at the Lord's presence. To look at God directly would be like looking straight at the light of the sun—it would blind us. Still, the Lord is our light and our salvation.

-- Meanwhile, we carry on in faith, trusting that God's presence surrounds us like the loving mother surrounds her child in the womb. And we do our best to reach out to touch each other in our needs and in our suffering, trusting that God will bring us to himself in the end.