Homily – Second Sunday in Lent – Fr. John Ozella

By the time people reach their 40's, they pretty much expect they're where they're going to be, socially and economically. By their 50's, few people expect many changes in their lives. By retirement, you don't expect much at all.

But Abraham gives us hope: ... life begins at 75. God calls him to uproot himself from where he lives, in Iraq, and hit the road. He promises him he'll father a new nation of people. ... Wouldn't everybody else have told God to get real, and forget about it?

When God told Abraham to leave home, God was asking a lot of him. 4,000 years ago, travel wasn't easy: it was by horse or camel, and it was dangerous. Leaving home meant leaving home; returning for a visit was pretty much out of the question.

But Abraham believes God's promise; he trusts him. He leaves his comfort zone at age 75, and starts walking with God in faith. God's call of Abraham sets in motion one of the most celebrated faith journeys in the Bible. And Abe becomes a daddy at age 100.

Abraham has unswerving faith in God -- he trusts God as his travel companion, on his long and roundabout journey. His faith saves him all the way, all his life. When Abraham leaves his home in the city of Ur in Iraq, he becomes a channel for God's will in the world: to start the Jewish nation who brought us Jesus Christ, who adopts us Gentiles into Abraham's family and saves us.

By the time of his death, Abraham had 2 sons and 2 grandchildren -- not quite a nation. But he died in faith, still believing God's promise to him, trusting that his nation would happen through his descendants. Abraham is the father of faith, a model of faith, because he was willing to stake his life on a promise whose fulfillment he didn't see during his lifetime.

2,000 years later, Jesus also maintained steadfast trust in God, despite all his shameful life experiences. And his faith and trust paid off: God glorifies him beyond imagination.
God doesn't just call Abraham and Jesus to help carry out his will. He calls each one of us to help carry out his will, to become channels for God's action in the world. He doesn't call us based on our merits, but on his purposes. As that old saying goes, God doesn't call the qualified; he qualifies those he calls. Each of us has a God-given purpose; will we respond to God's call positively like Abraham and Jesus, or go it our own way?

It isn't easy for many of us to trust in God, because we've deluded ourselves into thinking we're in control of our lives and that we know what's best for us. Yet Jesus still invites us, "Come, follow me." Trust me on your journey; I'm always with you. What's ahead? More dreams, more sufferings, more courage, more joy, more love -- and resurrection. A transfiguration for you, too.

God has a purpose for us. He wants to be involved in our lives, to be our travel partner on our journeys, to help us discern the right direction for us to take. He asks us to hear his call when we make life decisions, like plans for education, making a commitment to marriage, moving to a new city, deciding to change jobs or careers. Like Abraham, we need strong faith on our life's journey of discipleship, as we become teenagers, or parents, or enter "the golden years."

When God calls us into an unknown future, one thing is sure: The One calling us forward is faithful. As our parish family goes farther up the road this Lent, let's help increase each other's faith. We pray for unswerving faith, like Abraham's, no matter what curveballs come out way.