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Holy Faith, Santa Fe  
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Lent 2 – Year C  
Gen. 15.1-2, 17-18  
Psalm 27  
Phil. 3.17-4.1  
Luke 13.31-35

In the name of the one, true, and living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

We are on a journey. We all are on a journey. We know that the forty days of Lent are a journey. This Lent, we are exploring the theme of “Journey” in our Wednesday evening study series and at yesterday morning’s Lenten Retreat led by Mtr. Lynn. And Lent is a journey toward Easter – a journey toward the Feast of the Resurrection. But like many journeys, the scenery along the way can be just as important as the destination. In fact, the scenery and the events along the way can make the destination all the more spectacular, all the more dramatic, all the more worthwhile. So it is with our Lenten journey toward Easter.

We all are on another journey as well. We all are on the journey to the end of our earthly life. We may not be so aware of this journey, or so intentional about it, as with our Lenten journey. But with each passing day, we are a step closer to that ultimate destination – or should I say penultimate destination – the destination before the ultimate – because as Christians the ultimate destination for us is reunion with God. Nothing in our earthly journey can be ultimate if we take Jesus’ offer of life everlasting – won by Jesus’ crucifixion, death, and resurrection – seriously. How we make that journey to the end of our earthly life helps determine if we will make it to the destination and what destination that will be. A wrong turn along the way can lead us to a very

different place. Several wrong turns along the way and we may become so confused that we're unable to get our bearings and find our way.

These two journeys – our journey these forty days of Lent toward Easter and our journey to the end of our earthly life – are related to and inform each other. Our earthly journey shapes how we might pursue our Lenten journey. Our Lenten journey may very well determine the direction of our earthly journey.

In today's Gospel reading from Luke, Jesus is also on a journey. Jesus' journey is instructive for our journeys. Jesus is going through one town and village after another, teaching as he makes his way to Jerusalem. Jesus is on a journey toward Jerusalem. Ah, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it, we are told. Jerusalem for Jesus means death. Jesus knows that he is on a journey to his death, just as we are on our own journey to our own death.

Jesus is very resolute in his journey toward Jerusalem – probably more resolute than we are in our respective journeys. You know, along our journeys, people are always telling us which direction to head. Some of these voices are helpful, and others are not so helpful. Often the degree of helpfulness depends on where we are on our journey and whether we know the direction we're heading.

Jesus gives us some direction on our journey toward salvation. Just before today's Gospel, Jesus tells us to strive to enter through the narrow door. This isn't particularly helpful if, on our journey, we don't see a door. But it's enormously helpful if, on our journey, we're confronted by many doors. Then it becomes clear that the narrow door – the one that's harder to fit through, the one that doesn't look as large as the

others, the one we may need to leave some baggage on one side so we can pass through to the other side – the narrow door is the one to strive for.

Jesus also receives some direction in today's Gospel. Some Pharisees tell Jesus to get away from Galilee, where Jesus is journeying, because King Herod wants to kill Jesus. Jesus knows where he is on his journey and which direction he's heading, so he confidently rejects the Pharisees' advice. Jesus is clear about what God wants him to do. Jesus, in the name of God, is teaching, casting out demons, and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day – foreshadowing the three days he will spend in the grave – Jesus says he will finish his work. Bearing in mind these three days, Jesus says that today, tomorrow, and the next day he must be on his way because it's impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem. Regardless of the consequences, Jesus is going to obey God and follow his journey to the end.

We too must follow our journey to the end – to the end of our earthly life. We really have no other choice. But we do have a choice of what route we'll take and what scenery we'll see along the way. We have a choice of whether we will obey God's commandments or not. We may not be as confident as Jesus in knowing where we are on our journey and which direction we're heading, so we may need some reassurance along the way.

It's all right now and then to need assurance along our journey. In today's Old Testament reading from Genesis, Abram needs reassurance. Abram is also on a journey, a journey from the city of Ur in modern-day Iraq, where God led Abram away from his family, chose Abram to be the prime ancestor of God's people, and promised him the Holy Land from the River Nile in Egypt to the great River Euphrates. God

enacts an elaborate covenant ceremony with Abram and, shortly thereafter, God renames him Abraham who then becomes the great patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

But before the covenant is sealed, Abram needs reassurance. Listen to God's promises to Abram and Abram's responses: "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram replies, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me?" God says to Abram, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." But Abram replies, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" Now where I come from, Abram's responses sound very demanding and ungrateful. But upon further reflection and prayer, I realize that Abram is a scared sojourner on a journey leading to he knows not where. He doesn't know where he is, he doesn't know which direction he's going, and he needs a little reassurance.

God gives Abram that reassurance. God doesn't get angry; instead, God shows Abram the stars and tells him that his descendants will be as numerous. God enters into covenant with Abram and gives his descendants the Promised Land. Abram believes the LORD, and the LORD reckons it to Abram as righteousness.

We're a lot like Abram. We're on a journey. We may not know where we're going or in which direction we're heading. We may need some reassurance along the way. We may need some guidance, some sign posts, some familiar scenery to get our bearings. All we have to do is ask God. God won't get angry. If we believe the LORD, the LORD will reckon it to us as righteousness too. God will honor God's covenant with us. Now God's covenant with us has changed since Abram's time because of Jesus

Christ. But God is still faithful. God promises us that if we believe in Jesus Christ, we will have everlasting life – that ultimate destination of our journey – reunion with God.

Reunion with God through Jesus Christ is offered to us. Jesus tells the Pharisees who try to redirect him in his journey toward Jerusalem that they will not see him until the time comes when they say, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” We know that Jerusalem did see Jesus again on the Day of Palms when Jesus reached his journey’s destination and triumphantly entered Jerusalem on the back of a colt as the crowd shouted, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem ended as Jesus knew it would end and as God had planned, with Jesus’ crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Our Lenten journeys will end in the same way four weeks from today as we shout, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord,” and then we prepare for Jesus’ crucifixion, death, and resurrection. But we know our journey’s destination. We know God’s covenant – God’s promise of eternal life offered to us through Jesus Christ.

To keep us headed in the right direction, to help us know where we are on our own journey, we don’t have to wait until the end of our earthly life to see Jesus. We can see Jesus each time we journey to this table, recognizing the Body and Blood of our Lord, and acknowledging Jesus’ presence with the words, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” at the beginning of our Eucharistic prayer. And having been so nourished, sustained, and guided along our way, may we at the end of our earthly journey hear God say to us, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”

Amen.