

February 25, 2018 – Cum Sancto Spiritu
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Nocturnal Fantasizes Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Most people become uneasy, or anxious, when they are not in control. One experience where we have no control is in our dreams. Dreams are themselves strange, and we are unable to plan them. Dreamers are found throughout the Holy Scriptures: Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Pilate's wife and St. Paul were dreamers and experienced visions. Neurological science notwithstanding, dreams are more than activity in the pre-frontal lobes of our brains. They can be arenas for experiencing God at deepening levels.

We could ask Freud or Jung for a definition of dreams, but this morning we will look to Abraham. He is in his tenth decade of life, and has been a follower of God for ten years. God's voice speaks and re-speaks the same message or promise: *"You will be great, the father of a great nation. Your offspring will be like the sands of the sea."*

This faithful elder continues to listen and believe the voice of the Holy One. He follows the voice into the desert's blistering heat and physical danger. And, although his name means "exalted father," he and Sarah still have no children. Brilliant storyteller, the Voice speaks again, and we are told two more times, suggested three times, as God comes to Abraham *"as the sun was setting."*

God instructs Abraham to kill three animals and two birds. This weird ritual calls for cutting the animals from head to toe and, placing the halves on the ground, thus creating a pathway between them. And, *"as the sun was setting,"* Abraham slips into a profound sleep.

We are asked to envision a darkness that is palpable, that covers Abraham as he hears the voice of God. In his dream, God cuts a covenant with Abraham. Between the halved animals the sun sets, and Abraham sees a smoking fire pot and a blazing torch move through them. Then, the familiar voice says, *"Abraham, this*

land will be yours and your descendants. You have a future. There is a tomorrow for you." The darkness fades, the dream ends, and the voice finishes.

So, what does this message of God mean? I tend to believe that there is an Abraham wandering inside each of us. If so, then God's word is for you and me as well.

Perhaps we get to a place in our lives where realize we have done the best that we can. Up to this point Abraham had done his best. We are familiar with that feeling, aren't we? We have been following God for a decade or two, or a lifetime; and we have done the best we can with what God has given us: our home, our children, our profession, our health, God's church, and with the friendships we enjoy. But like Abraham, we still do not have what we need most. There is a nagging emptiness that begs: *"I think I need more."*

Most of us are now at the *"sun-is-setting"* stage of life. We have fewer years ahead of us than behind us. Now what? As with Abraham, we might be afraid. Our Old Testament text tells us to *"Be not afraid."* "Don't be not nervous." But, sometimes we are. We may not be convinced that our faith will get us as far as our retirement income. But, God reminds us that God is our shield and our magnificent reward.

We may have done our best . . . but God has done God's best. It was for Abraham, and some of us today, that it seems like a "Dark Night of the Soul," encounter, and we long for God's dream, a dream that calls to mind that God always does God's best. When we are frightened, when our future looks unpromising, God still does what God does best.

All of our lives are open before God. All of the predators of broken families, poor health, or the lousy career decisions want to come and take-over our lives. God comes however, with a dream and a promise. Here in the Book of Genesis, we discover the Gospel two thousand years before Jesus is born. During the Season of Lent, we remember the darkness that God has defeated. A day, not when the sun was setting, but in the luminosity of high noon, when a terrible darkness slid across the earth, and the heavens became like night.

On that day, God in Jesus hung on that holy tree. In the gloomiest day of human history, God walked in the death of everyone's doom, to demonstrate the way of love is the way of life.

As Abraham strolls through your life, I wonder what you are dreaming. I ruminate about what you are going to do with those dreams. And, I reflect on the question "*Are dreaming something new?*" Alleluia. Amen.