

God is for those he calls

Second Sunday of Lent (March 16): (R3) Mark 9:2-10; (R1) Genesis 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18; (R2) Romans 8:31-34.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Paul is encouraging the Christians in Rome to stand firm in the face of temptation and difficulty.

One of the reasons we should be firm is that God is for us. The Lord promised Abraham that his seed would inherit the whole land of Canaan, from the Nile to the Euphrates. Yet only a few generations later we find Abraham's descendants toiling as slaves over the brick kilns in Egypt. In this crisis they cried out, "Where is God now?" Of course God was where he always is — working in the lives of his people to fulfill his sacred promises. Pharaoh and all his armies could not hold captive those whom God had determined to free.

Thus, through the hands of Moses and Aaron, he leads them forth from Egypt. At the Red Sea, Pharaoh's armies pursue them. But God parts the waters and Israel marches to safety while the entire Egyptian army is drowned. In the wilderness, God feeds them with manna from heaven. He parts the waters of the Jordan River so they can cross over into the land of Canaan. The Canaanites with their chariots of iron are no match for them. Even their walled cities cannot stop God's people. They take the land and feast on its riches. For "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

We are God's people (1 Peter 2:10). God calls us. When Abraham left the land of his forefathers, and went forth — not knowing where it was he was to go — although in the midst of implacable enemies, he was quite safe because God had called him.

When Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings, he was met by Melchizedek, a great high priest. At that time Abraham was in great peril for it seemed likely that the defeated kings would regroup their armies, form alliances with other kings and certainly try to cut down so insignificant a person as that wan-



Father **Albert Shamon**

A word for Sunday

dering shepherd, Abraham.

But God said to him, "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." This became Abraham's source of strength — God had called him. He was a called man, and when God calls, he will not desert his chosen.

We, too, are God's chosen people. He calls us. If we heed his voice, he will give us power over all our enemies.

Finally, besides taking confidence in God's promises to us and in his purposes for us, we can trust in God's power acting through us. It is amazing what God can do through one thoroughly committed person.

One of the heroes of this past century is Raoul Wallenberg. In the last days of 1944, the Nazis rushed more than 100,000 Jews from Budapest to their deaths. Another 100,000 from Budapest were spared and survived the war, mostly through the audacity of this single Swedish diplomat, Raoul Wallenberg.

Wallenberg worked feverishly to save the Jews from Hitler. He would rush to a train station at the moment of deportation. He would then separate out those Jews who held Swedish passports. These were passports he previously had forged for them. He would remove them from the train as well as Jews with what he termed "preliminary application papers." These consisted of any scrap of paper they might have on them. More than once, Wallenberg drove like a madman to intercept a transport train, or to follow the route of the Nazis' murderous

mid-winter, 200-mile death march, and pluck more people out of danger.

Can you imagine that? One man saving thousands of others — not even of his faith? How did he do it? I believe God was with him. It is one thing to say "God is on our side" when you are waging war. It is quite another to say "God is on our side" when you are risking your own life to save others. God was on Wallenberg's side.

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" That is one of the great promises of Scripture. God is for us in his promises to us, in his purposes for us and, finally, in his power through us.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, March 17
Daniel 3:48-50; Psalms 79:8-9
11:32; Luke 6:36-38

Tuesday, March 18
Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Psalms 50:8-9
106:17, 21-23

Wednesday, March 19
2 Samuel 7:4-5A, 12-14A, 16
Psalms 69:2, 5, 27, 29; Romans 4:13-16, 18-22; Matthew 1:16-18, 21-24A or Luke 2:41-51A

Thursday, March 20
Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalms 144:4-6
Luke 16:19-31

Friday, March 21
Genesis 7:1-12, 14A, 17B
2A; Psalms 105:16-21
Matthew 21:2-43, 45-46

Saturday, March 22
Micah 7:1-5, 18-20; Psalms 103:1-4, 8-12; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

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