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**Senior Sermon**  
**April 1, 2011**

In Genesis 12, Abraham enters into a covenant with God for the first time. God tells Abraham to - to go for yourself to a foreign land. He is given the unthinkable call to leave his land and his family behind. In those times, there was nothing more difficult, more daunting. And Abraham goes. Traditionally, this text is used to show the great faith of Abraham, and while it most surely does this, the faith of Abraham is not often what faith is taken to mean today: Abraham's faith is not merely in his beliefs. We do not know, as readers of the text, what Abraham is thinking. What we know is what Abraham does. Abraham goes. His faith is not merely belief, but *embodied* belief. His faith is not a faith of passivity, but one of action. This is what faith means. Faith is not faith without action.

This January, I traveled to Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic and Austria studying the Holocaust. I studied not only the victims, but the persecutors, the bystanders, and those who resisted. Usually, our hindsight is twenty-twenty: most people today will look at the past and say, "There is no way I would have been a bystander, and I certainly would not have been a persecutor. I would have resisted. I would have been one of the good guys." This trip made me see, however, how easy it would have been to be a bystander. The bystanders had their own lives to think about, as well as the lives of their families. Those who stood by came from all walks of life. Yet none of them had the faith of Abraham. They may have believed that what was going on in their country was wrong, they may have believed that someone should do something; however, they did not embody that belief. Their faith was not strong enough for them to act out their belief. Those who resisted had strong faith, whether they were Christian or otherwise. The strength of their faith was not shown through their beliefs, but through their actions. They were called, by God, by humans, to act. And they acted. Despite how difficult, how daunting it was.

Surrounded by the pain and suffering that is still all too clear, I had to ask myself: What can I do? How can I make a difference? Because, in reality, I am a bystander today to the genocides that are occurring, to the children who are starving, to the homeless, and to all of the suffering people of this world. 20,000 children die a day from malnutrition and I sometimes waste the food on my plate. I buy products that are made by people who are oppressed. I support companies—through these purchases—that oppress people. It is easy to be aware of a problem, but often the problem seems too difficult or too daunting for one human to solve. The problem can also interrupt our lives, if we let it. It is easier, cheaper, and saner to ignore it. Abraham did not. He chose a hard life of exile from his people. Abraham showed me, can show us, how to live. He was asked to do the impossible and instead of letting himself be daunted by what he was called to do, he simply and powerfully began his journey: step by step. We must do the same. Each individual step we take can be a step towards a more just society, a more just world.

We must act. Through action we can be faithful to the world, and to God. The only question that remains is whether we are ready to be as strong as Abraham. Then, there are many steps that can and should be taken. Steps that are not even so daunting, but steps that will help us reach the foreign land of peace. Volunteer with a non-profit organization, work for the food bank, serve

food at the banquet, or raise awareness about the suffering in the world: there are so many ways that we can help. Too often, I feel, we just focus on our beliefs. Finding what we believe and changing our beliefs is not something that is bad; however, there must be a point where those beliefs are embodied. Actions with no beliefs behind them can be dangerous, but so can belief with no actions. There needs to be a middle ground, where belief and action go together. This is what Abraham does. So - go for yourself

So that you may see the needs of others; So that you may hear their cries; So that you may feel their anguish and their joy; Do not be afraid to defend the oppressed, the poor, the powerless, because of the anger and might of the powerful: Show the world where love and hope and faith are needed, and use them to bring them to those places. Open your ears and eyes, your hearts and lives, so that you may, in these coming days, be able to do the work of justice and peace.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted from a prayer from the Sabel Center, accessed: <http://www.anglocatholicism.org/prayers.html>