

## A Cloud of Witnesses: Week One

### Abraham and Sarah

Look to the rock from which you were hewn,  
And to the quarry from which you were dug.  
Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you:  
For he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.  
For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places,  
And will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord;  
Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. Isaiah 51.1-3

**Going and leaving:** Abram was told to go from his familiar surroundings and to go to a land he did not know:

Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land I will show you. I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you'... so Abram went as the Lord had told him. Genesis 12.1-4

- Is there something you feel called to leave behind – an attitude towards life, self or others, a feature of your lifestyle, some work you have been involved in, an attachment that you recognise holds you back from deeper life in God?
- Is there somewhere you sense God is drawing you: a different set of priorities, a new work, actively pursuing a long-held dream?
- Hold this 'going from' and 'going to' in your prayer. Ask God for the gifts of clarity and courage in discerning what to do and making those first steps.
- Don't expect certainty about where your actions will take you; this will only be discovered as you go.

**A Cloud of Witnesses:** Who has inspired you on your journey of faith? Whose witness now speaks to where you are and the movement you sense is needed in your life? It might be a biblical figure, a character from a film or novel, someone who has been part of the fabric of your days, or someone whose brief presence in your life brought about some change.

As you bring this figure to mind, how does their witness challenge or invite you? And what about Abraham and Sarah? How does their story speak to you?

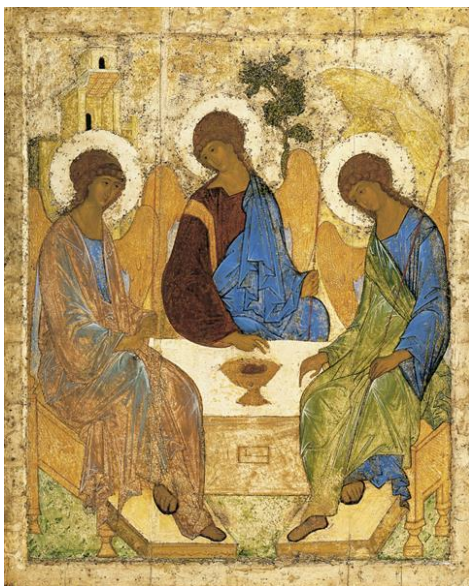
**Easter uncertainties:** We have lived a long time now with restrictions and unpredictability and it is likely to have had an effect on us. Just as shops begin to open up and we become able to meet friends and family outdoors, we may find that our energy level is low and our confidence fragile.

It might help to remember that Easter is a season, and not just a day. The resurrection appearances recorded in the Gospels took place for people who felt lost, fearful or at a low ebb. To go on entering into the Easter season, read afresh one of these narratives: John 20.1-18 / John 20.19-31 / John 21.1-19 / Luke 24.1-12 / Luke 24.13-35  
**The hospitality of Abraham and Sarah**

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day... Genesis 18.1-15



6<sup>th</sup> Century mosaic in San Vitale Basilica, Ravenna



Andrei Rublev, 15<sup>th</sup> Century

- Gaze, consider, contemplate**
- **Gaze** at one of these images...stay relaxed and attentive...notice what draws you
  - **Consider** what you see reflected here – what does it mean for you? How does it invite you?
  - **Contemplate** what you see – stay quietly with the image, allowing God to draw you more deeply into it and its significance for you.



Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.  
Hebrews 11.1

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going...from one person, and this one as good as dead, descendants were born, 'as many as the stars of the heavens and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore'.

Hebrews 11.8-12