

Abraham
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St. Michael the Archangel in Grand Prairie
2nd Sunday in Lent
February 25, 2018
Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Rom 8:31b-34; Mk 9:2-10

“Brothers and sisters: If God is for us, who can be against us?” Nobody, of course! This rhetorical question from St. Paul ought to bring us boundless encouragement, fortitude and hope. It’s a statement that takes God at His Word and never wavers in faith, unlike the one who, as St. James says, is of two minds, troubled by the waves of doubt, believing at one time but not at another. God Himself has created us out of sheer love and a desire that we share His Life with Him, so much so that when we turned away from Him in sin, questioning His Love, or worse, rejecting it, He identified Himself with our situation in the Person of His own Divine Son, Jesus. His Love is now manifestly on display for all to see, for all to accept and for all to embrace.

Such a gift of Love was foreshadowed to a stunning degree in the Old Testament, however. Before the Law and the ten commandments were given to the people of Israel through the person of Moses; and before the prophets were sent out to warn, instruct, and console the Lord’s people, the Book of Genesis tells us that *“God put Abraham to the test.”* Abraham is our father in faith, an exemplar to imitate when life’s demands and strains weigh heavy upon us and confusion, darkness, insecurity and doubt begin to test our faith. Abraham’s trial seems incomprehensible to us. No one of us could ever imagine agreeing to sacrifice one of our loved ones under any circumstances. Yet are not such trials analogously given to us as well? The anxiety a mother carries within her when it’s time for her son or daughter to move on and enter upon their own life in marriage and bringing up their own family? The separation that results from this, the new stage of life’s journey that must be trod is a kind of example of the sacrifice of Isaac that Abraham makes. It hurts. Or when a family must acknowledge a call from God to give up their son for the

Page 1 of 3

priesthood, or a daughter to consecrated life? There are all kinds of mixed emotions in such moments.

Consider Abraham's response: First, he is quick to hear the voice of God when it comes to him; he puts himself at the feet of Almighty God and is ready to carry out his commands. He has a disposition of obedience, that stands prepared to act upon the Holy Will of God no matter what He asks of him. We must remember that the promise of countless descendents was given to Abraham before this trial. God promised to bless the nations through his son, through Isaac! And now Isaac is to be sacrificed?! That does not make any sense at all! How could God ask such a thing of Abraham? Is God already breaking His promise, deceiving His servant Abraham? Impossible! Abraham did not know *how* God was going to make it happen, but He *did* know that God could never go back on His promises. In other words, his faith was unshakeable and his act of obedience was perfect. As the psalmist said today, "*I believed, even when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.'*"

Abraham's witness to faith in being willing to sacrifice his own son, his beloved son, was indeed only a foreshadowing of the greatest Sacrifice that could ever have been made. The same God that tested his servant Abraham, revealed Himself as sacrificial Love incarnate. God the Father did not spare His own Son in bringing about the redemption of humanity. In fact, similar to the way Isaac silently obeyed His father's orders and put his life down for sacrifice, so Our Lord Jesus *laid down His Life for His friends*. He emptied Himself and took our place as the Lamb to be slaughtered for the cleansing of our sins.

Jesus in collaboration with His Father seized this opportunity in the journey toward Jerusalem to reveal the deepest truth about the identity of the Christ and His missionary goal. Transfigured with a brightness of glory befitting of God alone, Jesus showed Himself to be with Moses and Elijah, the two greatest figures representing the Law and the Prophets, the two servants

at either side of their Creator, Master and Lord. God the Father also spoke clearly to Peter, James and John in claiming Jesus as His only beloved Son, a Son who was teaching them the way back to Him. But such glory was meant to strengthen the disciples for the task committed to them in the near future. For as they came down the mountain, after the vision vanished and they were once again alone, Jesus warned them not to speak about it until He would rise from the dead. This must have confused them, bothered them and made them doubt. They had no idea what that meant. They had just seen Jesus in glory and now He's openly telling them that He is going to die only to rise again. This doesn't make sense to our understanding. What was God doing then? What is He doing now? What's He doing in my life and the life of my loved ones?

Brothers and sisters, most of us, if not all of us are bothered, confronted and tested by these same thoughts and questions from time to time. The answers are present to us in the Person of Jesus Christ. By following His example, filling ourselves with His Word and His nourishing Body and Blood, and laying our lives down in an act of obedient love, we will be presenting to the Father a sacrifice that He cannot refuse because He cannot refuse the Perfect Sacrifice of His Only Beloved Son. Acting in faith the way Abraham did, knowing that God is always faithful to His promises, we will not need to concern ourselves needlessly with the hidden and mysterious reasons of *how* God is going to accomplish His plan of salvation for us. Just as Peter, James, and John were at a loss as to who Jesus was and what He was asking of them prior to His resurrection, so are we asked to surrender our lives in loving trust to Him, so that He can transfigure our hearts and minds to reflect the same splendor He once unveiled to them, a splendor that with God's grace and magnificent might, we may one day enjoy eternally with Him, after we walk with Him by faith not sight. *For truly if God is for us, who can be against us?!*