

Sacrifice on Behalf of the World

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CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: In our day-to-day lives, we often make sacrifices unknown to others—instances wherein we are called to “offer it up” because we have no other choice. Abraham’s sacrifice in the Hebrew scriptures, however, is known: he makes a conscious choice to offer to God his eldest born, making the offering all the more meaningful. Let us quiet our hearts as we listen to the word of God, and reflect together on Saint Mother Teresa’s attitude toward the gift of sacrifice.

Reader 1: A reading from the book of Genesis (Gen. 22: 9-12)

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Next he bound his son Isaac, and put him on top of the wood on the altar. Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, “Abraham, Abraham!” “Here I am,” he answered.

“Do not lay your hand on the boy,” said the angel. “Do not do the least thing to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you did not withhold from me your son, your only one.”

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God

REFLECTION

Reader 2: “Sacrifice, surrender, and suffering are not popular topics nowadays. Our culture makes us believe that we can have it all, that we should demand our rights, that with the right technology all pain and problems can be overcome. This is not my attitude toward sacrifice. I know that it is impossible to relieve

the world’s suffering unless God’s people are willing to surrender to God, to make sacrifices, and to suffer along with the poor.

From the beginning of time the human heart has felt the need to offer God a sacrifice. What is an acceptable sacrifice? One that is good for the people of God. One that is made on behalf of the world.”¹

- How are you being called to offer sacrifice to God for the sake of God’s people?
- What does it mean for you to make a sacrifice “on behalf of the world” in your current context?
- In what ways can you make small changes in your day-to-day life — how you spend your time, money, energy — such that you can have a part in relieving the suffering of the poor and marginalized?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: God of Abraham and of Isaac, you who sacrificed your own Son for our sake: walk with us as we work to sacrifice for the good of your people.

Even as Abraham was prepared to offer the ultimate sacrifice of his own flesh and blood, Isaac, you did not leave them alone to suffer. Indeed, amid our most difficult moments, we know that you are there with us, supporting us in our surrender to you.

Grant, we pray, the courage and the humility to make difficult choices for the good of the world, that our sacrifice might alleviate some of the world’s suffering and thus be pleasing to you.

Through Christ our Lord, we pray: Amen.

NOTE

1. Excerpted from *In the Heart of the World: Thoughts, Stories, and Prayers by Mother Teresa*, edited by Becky Benenate, ed., (1997): 47-48.

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