

ASHES TO FONT

Transfigured Heart

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

God put Abraham to the test. He called to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am!" He replied.

Then God said: "Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you."

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

But the Lord's messenger called to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!"

"Here I am!" He answered.

"Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger. Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son."

As Abraham looked about, he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So he went and took the ram and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son.

Again the Lord's messenger called to Abraham from heaven and said: "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you acted as you did in not withholding from me your beloved son, I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore; your descendants shall take possession of the gates of their enemies, and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing

(New American Bible, Revised Edition, 2010.)



The story of Abraham and Isaac can be quite distressing. Although God does not require Abraham's willing sacrifice of his beloved son, Isaac, we hear from St. Paul in this Sunday's second reading that God the Father is willing to sacrifice his Beloved Son for the salvation of the world. We could easily take this for granted. We have become so accustomed to God's complete love for creation, that we forget the cost of such a great sacrifice.

Christ embraces his Father's complete love, and in return he loves humanity with a complete and sacrificial love that will not allow him to stay in the moment of glory on the mountaintop.

Great things happen on mountaintops in Scripture, but one doesn't truly live on the summit. We are made to live in uncomfortable and often inconvenient places with our family, friends, and community. This requires willing sacrifice. We don't derive joy from sacrifice itself; but rather when we



Prayers

Jesus, give us the faith to move mountains and enable us with your love as we begin the ascent toward you. Whenever we encounter obstacles—either within or without—give us your power to overcome in faith and love. As adopted sons and daughters, we can do all things through you, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

- *Mark Haydn, LC, STL. Meditations on Vatican Art, Ligouri Publications, 2013 p. 78.*

Lord, you turn all things to the advantage of those who love you.

Implant in my heart, an undying love for you, so that nothing may turn me from you.

Lord, turn my necessities into virtue, and the works of nature into works of grace.

Lord, let my body be a servant of my spirit, and both body and spirit servants of Jesus.

By seeking your kingship above all else, may I enter and partake of your glory hereafter.

In the name of your servant Jesus. Amen.

--ancient prayer, author unknown

willingly sacrifice out of love for others.

The mystery of Christ's life, death, Resurrection, and Ascension can transfigure us into glorious examples of love, patience, acceptance, peace, humility, and reconciliation. We should not squander the opportunity to allow God's transformative grace to move us beyond our comfort zones this Lent. We must be willing to listen and discern God's voice calling us to our true vocation: our Baptismal call.

This will not work if we only partially listen. Abraham heard and discerned something very disturbing; the willing sacrifice of his beloved son. He did not stop listening to God's plan upon hearing this difficult message, but instead remained open and heard God's second message sparing Isaac.

When God's commands seem too demanding, we often choose to tune out His message. This happens frequently with Scripture. We may read the command to forgive our enemies, but how often do we decide to wait? God tells us to give without seeking thanks, but how often do we turn down recognition for our gifts? We are called to take care of the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the alien (migrants/immigrants). How often do we ignore our baptismal calling to help those in need, deciding instead to outsource our Christian charity?

When we follow the pattern of Christ, who forgives, loves, listens, and shares, we are not transformed physically into a handsome or beautiful modern day disciple. The beauty goes beyond the superficial to where it really matters, taking root in our souls.

If we journey purposefully this Lent, we will arrive at the glory of Easter morning to see that the journey has brought us joy far outweighing any personal sacrifices we have made along the way. As we embrace conversion, we ourselves start to glow—just a little—like the transfigured Christ. This glow is our gift to each other as knights and ladies of the EOHSJ, radiating among us along the way.