

Second Sunday of Lent

Two old men are chatting. One man says, "My friend, you must try this memory pill I'm taking. I remember everything. It's an amazing memory booster." The other man says, "Sounds wonderful. What is the name of the pill?" The first man says, "Hmm! The name of the pill ... Let's see ... Hmmm, what is the name of the flower produced on a garden plant with thorns? It's red ... You give it on Valentine's Day." The other man says, "A rose?" The first man says, "Yes, that's right!" Then, calling for his wife, he says, "Rose, what is the name of that pill which I take to boost my memory?"

Dear friends,

We all sacrifice so many things for our family, children, for our job and so on. Love demands that we make many sacrifices. What do you mean by when we say that we make sacrifices? Christ died for us. the Eucharist is a sacrifice.

The readings today ask us to surrender ourselves for the better gift. The First Reading and the Gospel invite us to reflect on sacrifice. What is a sacrifice? And why would God want one, from Abraham or from us through Christ?

Webster dictionary explains, "sacrifice is a destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else."

The first thing to see is that a sacrifice is a peculiar kind of gift.

In the case of ordinary gifts, which aren't sacrifices, the person who gets the gift is the one who benefits from the gift-giving. That person has the thing given; and if that thing was good enough to give, it is a good thing to get too. So the gift-receiver is the primary beneficiary of ordinary gift-giving.

But a sacrifice is a different kind of gift. When one person gives something as a sacrifice, however great his gift is, in the giving of it he himself receives something of very great value. In sacrifice the gift-giver is the primary beneficiary of gift-giving.

In the first reading Abraham was asked to give Isaac back. It was Abraham's long term dream to have a son. Abraham longed for it many years. In the situation of hopelessness, Sarah got a son. He was a precious gift. Now God invites Abraham to give it back. Abraham was ready to sacrifice which means ready to surrender for the sake of getting a bigger thing. There is a trust build up between God and us. The bigger thing was a promise of blessing of the descendants and Land.

A gift, by definition, is something that is not deserved but given freely. What is our first impulse when we are given a gift? Our instinctual response is: "I can't take this! I don't

deserve this!" In essence, that gesture, that healthy instinctual response, is an attempt to give the gift back to its giver. But, of course, the giver refuses to take the gift back and re-gives it to us with the assurance: "but I want you to have this!" When we receive it the second time, it is now more properly ours because, by trying to give it back, we healthily recognized that it was a gift, unmerited, undeserved. This is what happened to Abraham with Isaac.

Jesus in the gospel surrenders himself to God who sent him to the world. It was a glory of surrender. He transfigured totally for the better glory. He surrendered himself to suffer for us. It is the greatest gift that we ever get. The trust was proved between Jesus and God in surrendering.

We are given a gift of life for a better value. What are we going to surrender back?

When the farmer gets the crop in the field, he used to give the first fruits to God who gave him the harvest. Then they eat without guilt. How do we want to surrender ourselves? Partly, 50% or totally? s