

Sacrifice – Choosing Upward Good

Headline: Sacrifice is necessary for humans to move upward - that is closer to God. Inevitably we encounter sacrifice at every stage of our lives, from about 6 months age until death. As fathers we can step up to help our families understand and embrace sacrifice and realize its potential to yield the upward good God has planned for them.

Objective: Sacrifice, a word describing an intent or act of offering (noun) or as a past or current action (verb). Suffering is different; it is always a verb, something endured. Sacrifice is core to our faith. It is at the heart of what makes us human. Lower animals exist without sacrifice. There is an image in the adoration chapel representing Christ's sacrifice on the cross for his children. This is the mythical pelican lancing its own side to yield blood for its chick's hunger representing Christ. Sometimes it comes as a cross to carry. Sometimes as a trade-off; delaying, giving up something, intentionally becoming a servant to others. Sometimes its circumstance is beyond our control, other times it is to choose to sacrifice voluntarily. As fathers, we can step up to help our loved ones learn how to encounter sacrifice positively. That means trusting sacrifice is not just hard, difficult, or painful. It has an upside in bringing them closer to God. Helping our loved ones learn how to respond to sacrifice leads to them toward the upward good God intends us to find beyond the sacrifice.

Song Suggestion: Take up your cross

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Genesis 4:3-7

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?”

2 Corinthians 7-9

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

1 Peter 2-5

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ

Catechism 2099

It is right to offer sacrifice to God as a sign of adoration and gratitude, supplication and communion: “Every action done so as to cling to God in communion of holiness, and thus achieve blessedness, is a true sacrifice.”

Saint: Saints Peter and Paul, once Christ called you, you responded with total abandonment to His holy will. Through you, the Church was founded and began to grow. Please pray for me, that I will fully devote myself to the ongoing mission of the Church, so that God can use me according to His holy will. Saints Peter and Paul, pray for me. Jesus, I trust in You.

Vignette: – It was Lent season once again and Kevin thought about how much he hated the whole sacrifice thing. It is just too much. He and his whole family pushed back against all notions of sacrifice in their daily lives. They use the world they live in to resolve everything they do not like. On his way to a customer meeting he listened to a podcast about sacrifice. What he heard began to niggle at how he, and his family, looked and felt about sacrifice. His windshield time pondering the podcast began to change his perspective about sacrifice. He considered sacrifice may not be something to avoid at all costs. It just might be something so intrinsic to their humanity and Christianity that responding positively to sacrifice instead of reacting negatively to it would help them all be happier and more uplifted by the upward good that God really intends for them to find. On the drive back home, his resolution grew. He decided to step up to sacrifice differently in the future. He would strive to help his family learn how sacrifice makes us uniquely human and grow spiritually. He would help them to learn how to respond positively to sacrifice; not avoid it. Then he began to reflect upon his own sacrifice encounters. How had he handled them, how could he have handled them differently. More importantly how can he apply what he has learned to help his family encounter sacrifice differently too?

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. Re read the Bible verse on Cain's sacrifice and discuss its lesson. What can you take away from it to encounter sacrifice in a way pleasing to the Lord
2. Catholics often say, "Offer it up". How would you describe a good offering? What was Cain's failure?
3. Babies get 100% of what they want all the time; their needs are fully met. Around 24 months, they become demanding. They want what they want now and will carry on until they get it. These are their first opportunities to learn about sacrifice. Discuss what you can do to answer their pleas with a positive twist toward good sacrifice?
4. Pre-teens grow increasingly difficult as puberty arises within them. Moodiness and having difficulties making decisions comes up a lot. How does sacrifice enter those circumstances.
5. Teens and young adults are moving toward independence. How do they encounter sacrifice and are they seeing that not all sacrifice is bad? Do they discover the rainbow after the storm.
6. What aspirations do you have to change or do differently about how you will encounter sacrifice differently in the future?

Resources: Jordan B Peterson podcasts inspired this topic.

The Power of sacrifice

<https://youtu.be/bPu2trYaJ4s?si=iLhd56gC3323a-qj> 12 minutes

Lecture: Biblical Series XII: The Great Sacrifice: Abraham and Isaac

<https://youtu.be/-yUP40gwht0?si=u8-pw-E2Fn8LX12s>

Step it up!

1. What are your personal takeaways from today's discussion of sacrifice?
2. When encountering sacrifice, what do you want yourself or your loved ones do differently in the future?

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