

## **February 28, 2021**

Gen 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Rom 8:31b-34; Mk 9:2-10

God is more than a neat idea, more than a hypothetical being who sits outside of our situation and is there to be called upon if we need something. God is a presence of loving care - a presence and a power acting when we open ourselves to it. I recently had a reaffirmation of this presence and power as I turned to the power of God at a difficult time. And God answered - placing things in the hands of Jesus, having faith, and entering into prayer were key. Often the changes that are needed are not in the world around us, but in ourselves. Through this recent experience I saw a transformation in myself, and because of that a transformation, I saw a change in the situations that were concerning me. God has an amazing way of working things out.

For this to happen, we have to be willing to surrender our wills, to allow God to take the lead, to trust in the wisdom of God. We heard in the second reading: *If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?* The sacrifices that we have to make to become closer to God are not as big as we make them out to be. Paul says *If God is for us, who can be against us?* We have to get right with God first - then everything else follows. Paul says that God will *give us everything else along with him* - he says that they come along with Jesus - they are attached to our reception of Jesus. God has shown us that the way to a resolution in life's situations, and even more importantly a resolution in our relationship with God, often involves some sacrifice that brings us closer to Jesus and to the blessings contained in Him.

And don't we have a hard time making a sacrifice? In my situation I had to sacrifice some time, I had to sacrifice some of my way of doing things, I had to sacrifice my desires - but it was well worth it. We may think that we need the things, the attitudes, the plans that we have in order for success to happen - but this is not true. Look at the first reading. Talk about a tough sacrifice! Abraham has been promised by God a great nation to come from him - the entire promise depends on his son Isaac. Abraham and his wife miraculously have this child when they are both well past child-bearing years and now that he is a teenager, they are even older. Yet God tells Abraham to kill and sacrifice the boy that he loves. You may wonder why Abraham goes so

willingly and without hesitation. We would be thinking: “This doesn’t make sense, how can God achieve the promise if the boy is dead - God’s not thinking too clearly.”

But Abraham goes to make the sacrifice - what was he thinking? The letter to the Hebrews explains that *[Abraham] reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead*. He is so confident that as he goes up to make the sacrifice he tells his servants that both of them will come back. Abraham believes that God must be able to work this out - that nothing is outside of God’s power. Isaac lives, and because of his fidelity, God says *I will bless you abundantly ... and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing—all this because you obeyed my command*. God’s plan was bigger than Abraham knew, but Abraham did not think he needed to know the plan, he just followed what God said. Abraham was willing to make the sacrifice and did not withhold from God anything - even the most valuable thing he could lay his hand on - and it payed off.

Like God provides the ram caught in the thicket that is sacrificed in Isaac’s place, The Father steps in in our time and gives his only son to pay our debit and be sacrificed for us in our place. We are joined to the body of Jesus in Baptism and as Jesus is sacrificed for our sins we are sacrificed, our debit is paid, and as Jesus is raised we are given our lives back. But to not be drawn away from God and remain open to God’s power we have to make some sacrifices. The Apostles in the Gospel must come down off of the mountain and put a lot of things aside before they can share in the glory that was shown to them in the Transfiguration. The sacrifices we make not only keep us united to the mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection and allow us to have an eternal life, but they also open us up to the power of God in this life.

God lifted Abraham out of the situation he was in and provided another solution that he never would have thought of, so too, those who sacrifice their wills, plans, desires, and possessions in this life - trusting in God to work out a solution - will receive an answer. These solutions may come from changes in situations that are a problem for us, or not. If not, we will receive the graces to get through it and change ourselves - often both we and the situation need to change for things to get better. Our connection with the Lord deepens through this whole process of surrender to God in faith and opens us up to an even greater blessing - the joys of eternal life with God - and that’s something that is worth any amount of earthly sacrifice.