# “Self-Sacrifice”

At the heart of our readings today is the word “self-Sacrifice.” Self-sacrifice is when we give up what we want for the glory of God so anther could have it. Self-sacrifice is the fruit of our love for God above all things and our desire to love our neighbor for God’s sake. Self-sacrifice means having the spirit of sacrifice and self-denial. It is when we have childlike trust in God that He is faithful and will reward our virtue with His grace. Self-sacrifice is living by obedience of faith in God, it manifests itself in works of love and self-giving that is inspiring to others.

Self-sacrifice means, freely offering ourselves, and making everything we do a sacrifice in praise of God’s name. It means being a sacrifice to God, with full confidence in God that leads us to fully offer our bodies to God. Self-sacrifice manifests itself in works of love and self-giving that inspires others to want to play it forward. It leads to holiness and we will be rewarded with the belt of chastity and God would be our shield and helmet. God wants us to let our hearts be an altar so we can present our self-sacrifice to Him by our self-denial.

In our first reading, we heard about the story of the kind widow of Zarephath who did an act of kindness to Elijah the prophet of God. For her generosity, she was rewarded many, many times over. This story manifests the power, generosity, and wisdom of God. It was to this woman, a widow that Elijah was sent during a famine. This widow was not even a Jew, but she trusted in the words of the prophet and the promise of God. In the face of starvation, she gave her last once of food to the prophet before feeding herself and her son. It was a self-sacrifice in the face of death.

 By her generosity she acknowledged that God was her ultimate source of sustenance which she freely shared with Elijah. However, God would not be outdone in generosity. God provided for her, her son, and Elijah until the end of the famine. James Thomson, a Scottish author in the 18th century wrote the famous line: “A penny saved is a penny got.” However, with God we might say, a penny spent is a penny used, meaning that the purpose of money is found not in hoarding but in using it to help others who are in need.

Our lessons from this story are, when we share what we have, no matter how modest, with those who do not have as much as we do, God’s reward would be abundant. We are His hands, feet, mouth, ears, and eyes when He wants to reach out to those who do not know Him as the true God. He desires that our light shines before others so they may see His goodness in us and come to know and give praise to Him our heavenly Father. We are also reminded, it is only when we acknowledge that we have nothing and allow our poverty to be revealed, then God would step in to make clear that He alone is the source of all success we might have in life.

In our second reading, we heard Christ described as the new high Priest and the suffering servant foretold by Prophet Isaiah. We are given a vivid image of Christ who offered Himself as a self-sacrifice. He did not offer material things such as the widow in our first reading, but He offered His own body and blood once and for all. His self-sacrifice is for the redemption of the whole world. He became the high Priest and the victim who laid down His life willingly because of His unfathomable and endless love for us.

In this passage, we are pointed to the fact that our inheritance comes after the death of our benefactor. The one who came down from heaven and died for us so we can live for eternity and become the adopted children of God. From this passage, we are told that after His sacrifice, Christ did not enter into a humanly made sanctuary, but into the heavenly sanctuary so He could perpetually present Himself to God in the one and only sacrifice. He made this sacrifice to take away our sins and procure our salvation. His death removed our sins and provided each and all of us the opportunity to share in the richness of a new creation.

As we are gathered here today, it is important for us to remember that Christ died once and for all for our sin and the very sin of the world. It is His desire that we inherit a place at the table if we so desire to follow His commandments of love as we heard in our Gospel last week Sunday. Our purpose in gathering at the table of the Eucharist is not to celebrate a repeat of the sacrifice but to continue the benefits of that inheritance to the lives of those who now gather throughout the world in a different human time and place.

In our Gospel reading, the widow in our story, gave the last bit of money she had to support the work of the priests in the temple. Jesus singled her out as the embodiment of total self-giving and love of others. She was not just a good person but a shining bright light for others to see. She knew where the little money she had come from. She knew it came from God and she offered it back to God trusting in the providence of God who loves her beyond her wildest imagination.

Jesus calls us to imitate the sacrifice of love demonstrated by the widow. As Scripture tells us, we are not going to be judged by how much we give, for the Scribes and the wealthy gave far more than the widow. Rather, we will be judged by whether our gift is proportionate with how much we are given.

I am amazed at the self-sacrifice that is happening in our parish. I know in this parish as small and young as we are right now, there is a lot of self-giving. All the improvement work that has been done outside and inside the church, are being done through the generosity of parishioners without costing the parish any money. Those who could not donate money at this time, have donated their time because they see the many needs of the parish. That is an act of self-sacrifice for the glory of God.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us set our hearts to follow the examples of the widows in our readings, with confidence that our jars of flour will not grow empty, nor our jugs of oil run dry.