

***First Sunday of Lent
February 18, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #8***

“After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here am I.’ He said, ‘Take your son, your only-begotten son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moréah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” (Genesis 22:1-2)

We can find, scattered throughout our Catholic history, comparisons between the sacrifice of Isaac and the sacrifice of Jesus. At first glance, if what we are celebrating today is just a communal meal, then this comparison will not offer us much to reflect upon. However, if we view the Eucharist as the representation of the sacrifice of Jesus, then, this comparison can offer us much to reflect upon. Let us take this time to reflect upon both of these sacrifices and see how the sacrifice of Isaac prefigured the sacrifice of Jesus. Before we continue, I must remind you, we examined a portion of this thought in 2021 when our parish participated in “The Year of the Eucharist and Parish.” Therefore, if I repeat myself, I ask your forgiveness.

We begin by marking the similarities between these two sacrifices. (1) Divine Intervention was necessary for both the births of Isaac and Jesus. (2) Both sons were promised by God to fulfill a covenant He had made with man. (3) As Isaac trusted his father concerning the sacrifice, so would Jesus trust His Father concerning His sacrifice. (4) Each son was to carry the wood, which would be used for the sacrifice, as they ascended the mountain. (5) As a ram, caught in thorns, would be offered as a sacrifice in place of Isaac, we acknowledge Jesus as the Lamb, crowned with thorns, who is offered as a sacrifice. (6) As Abraham, through his love, is willing to sacrifice his son, so too the Father in His love offers His Son as the perfect sacrifice. (7) Finally, a blessing is given to mankind once both of these sacrifices are completed: descendants for Abraham and salvation for us.

The Mass is that sacrifice prefigured in Isaac and fulfilled in Jesus. And like both Abraham and God, we must be committed to offering this sacrifice. Please, let us not gloss over that statement. We must show the same commitment as both Abraham and God. We must be willing to detach ourselves of those things we hold most dear. Why? We cannot allow anything to usurp the primary place of God in our lives. But please, do not take my words as the sole authority on this matter. Jesus said: *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”* (Luke 14:26). This is the total commitment this Sunday Eucharistic sacrifice demands. I pray we will consider this level of loving dedication as we begin our Lenten journey this year.