

Abraham faced an impossible decision. He could either maintain his faith with God whom he loved, or he could refuse the sacrifice, that is to kill his son Isaac, whom he loved.

The way the Old Testament reading for today is structured, some details were left out, (*Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18*) but for the sake of this homily, I'm going to fill them back in. Abraham was woken in the night by God and commanded to travel to a barren location 3 days distant to sacrifice his only son. The son of his old age, the son that couldn't be replaced given that both he and his wife Sarah were over 100 years old at the time. The Son that represented the future that God had promised him. (*Gn 17:1-8*) The same God who had just command him to destroy that future.

Abraham loved God, just as he loved his son. So with a heavy heart he had Isaac, with assistance from 2 hired hands gather the wood for his own funeral pyre and load it onto several beasts of burden. Can we even imagine the anguish Abraham suffered as he traveled the 3 days to the place of sacrifice? Sharing the chores with his son, speaking while traveling, relaxing before going to sleep at night by the fire, knowing that Isaac's life would soon end by Abraham's own hand.

When they arrived they made camp and left the hired hands. As they walked the final distance Isaac says to Abraham, "Behold we have fire and wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (*Gn 22:7*) Abraham's heart breaks once again, but in his faith in God, he answers; "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." (*Gn 22:8*). When they arrived they set to work building an altar of stones and then placed the wood upon the altar. Sometimes we just walk away or we loose them because we don't use them.

Look at how much love and trust Isaac showed when he allowed his father Abraham to bind him and place him on the altar for sacrifice. Isaac was 100 years younger than Abraham, he had to be a willing sacrifice! All he had to do was run, or he could have easily over-powered his father but he didn't. Can we see it? The elderly father, the young son, both in tears, both frightened, both determined in their faith, in their integrity, in their love for one another to do as God commanded.

We all share with Abraham and Isaac the same gifts from the Holy Spirit that are patently obvious in this story: faith, integrity and the capacity to

love. These are gifts that no one can take from us. No outside force can rob us of these gifts, not even death. But all too often, at the slightest temptation we give them away.

One of the most dramatic example that illustrates this point is when a husband and wife break their marriage vows. In that act they give away their integrity, they give away their faith in God and the validity of the Sacrament of Marriage. Finally because the act cannot be accomplished without hardening their hearts, they give away their capacity to love.

Every sin has the exact same impact on the person committing the sin and on the people around them. One person sins against another so the offended party hardens their heart, giving away their capacity to love, gives away their faith with God by deciding to punish the offender and in convincing themselves that their actions are just, give away their integrity. Then they retaliate. The cycle continues and the devil throws a party because he just got a twofer!

How do we break this terrible destructive cycle that tears at the very fabric of who we are as children of God? How do we become better people in faith, love and integrity of heart?

We have to start on our knees. We need to ask Jesus in all humility to see ourselves as he sees us. We tend to think that we aren't broken, that it is everyone else who has a problem. When we think this way, it is another act where we give away our faith, integrity and capacity to love. We are all broken sinners and only by looking deeply within ourselves with God's help will we ever know what we need to do to address our own brokenness.

Where should we do this? Where should we make this prayer? Anywhere where we can find peace and quiet is acceptable, but the very best place is right here, in the Nave, in the presence of the Eucharist, the physical manifestation of Jesus Christ resident in the Tabernacle or in the Monstrance during Adoration. Since Jesus was tortured to death for us, it is appropriate that we inconvenience ourselves a little by making the journey into his presence when we ask him for this favor.

Then we need to reconcile with God, the Church and the people we have sinned against. Next time you come in to partake in the great Sacrament of Reconciliation spend 5 minutes here in the Nave with your heart open and your mouth shut. Then get in line. When you get to the confessional, you will notice the difference.

Someday we all want to experience a transfigured body like Peter, James and John witnessed in today's Gospel. We all want to be in the presence of the Trinity and spend eternity with him in heaven. When we stand at those gates we will present to Jesus our faith, our integrity and how much we love.