

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent – B  
March 8, 2009

Introduction: God Is Worthy of Our Unconditional Trust

Our **first job** during Lent is to **think more often than usual** about God.

This is exactly what the devil **doesn't** want us to do.

- ✍ Instead, he wants us to become **obsessed** with our **problems**, the **evils** in the world, our self-centered **ambitions**, the **difficulties** other people cause us, the **many** things God **demand**s of us if we're going to be good Christians...
- ✍ The devil knows that the **less** we **think** of God, the less we will **trust** God.
- ✍ And if we **trust** God less, we are more likely to **walk away** from him, to **reject** his commandments, teachings, and inspirations.
- ✍ That's what **sin** is - a **walking away from God**, a **breakdown in our trust** of God.
- ✍ And sin is what the devil uses to **enslave** us, to **poison** our hearts, **darken** our minds, and bury **time bombs** in the soil of our lives.

I don't know **anything** that requires more trust than what we hear about in today's 1<sup>st</sup> reading:

- ✍ Abraham, take your son, Isaac, your **ONLY** son, whom you love, and offer him...as a burnt offering upon the mountain.
- ✍ WHAT?!?!?
- ✍ Didn't God promise me that my descendants would be as numerous as the stars?
- ✍ Isaac is my **ONLY** son – I am an old man...

Can you **imagine** what Abraham must think? The anguish? But what does Abraham do? He **TRUSTS** – even against what seems **impossible**. Abraham **BELIEVES**, it seems, that God will raise Isaac from the dead. Little does he know what God really has in store.

- ✍ As they reach the mountain, they pile the wood on Isaac's back – for him to carry it up the hill.
- ✍ They reach the summit and, together, build an altar and prepare the wood for the fire – on which to place the offering to be burned.
- ✍ “Father,” says Isaac, “the altar is ready, but where is the animal for sacrifice?” (Boy, isn't THAT a dagger into Abraham's heart?)
- ✍ “Don't worry, son. God will provide”

**AND DOES HE EVER!!!!**

The angel stops Abraham from killing Isaac – “Now I know that you fear God – that you have not withheld your son, your **ONLY** son, from me.”

And rather than offering his son – they offer a ram, whose horns are caught in a thorn.

It's all there! The great mystery of Christ's death is prefigured here:

- ✍ The Father giving His only Son as a sacrifice
- ✍ The Son, carrying the wood on His own back up a mountain to the place of sacrifice
- ✍ The ram, with it's head caught in thorns...

Do you see what God is preparing? Abraham was SO right – God will provide! And hasn't He! His only Son for our redemption!

Beautiful imagery, but, what does it teach us?

What does the angel tell Abraham? “Now I know that you fear God, for you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

This was a TEST! God was trying to PROVE something – how much Abraham trusted and feared God. But this “test” was not for God – He already KNEW that Abraham trusted.

The “test” was for ABRAHAM – to prove to HIMSELF how much he trusted in God. And he was willing to offer EVERYTHING – even his own, beloved son, because he TRUSTED in God and His promises. Oh, he didn't have the answers, but he trusted none-the-less.

What about you? Is God testing you? Is God asking YOU, this Lent, to take your beloved... what is it? TV, a sinful habit, a vice, a relationship, ...what is God asking YOU to sacrifice – to give up – to PROVE your trust in Him?

This is the difficulty, I think, in our spiritual lives. The ONE thing we MOST do NOT want to give up – is exactly what God is asking of us. That ONE sin, that ONE vice, that ONE bad habit... God wants us to let go of that ONE thing we love the most, and least want to sacrifice – and He wants us to sacrifice it to Him – to PROVE how much we trust and fear God.

But the devil wants us to trust in that one thing – rather than trust in God.

“Origin” (an early Father of the Church and prolific writer) said this: “Show that faith in God is stronger than the affections of the flesh.”

Can WE do that, this Lent? Like Abraham, can we prove – not to God, but to ourselves – that our trust in God is stronger than our trust in any one and any thing else?

After all, if God gave up HIS only Son for us – to prove HIS love for us... “If God is for us, who can possibly be against us?”

What is God asking you to sacrifice – to prove your trust in God is stronger than your trust in anything else?