

Ordinary 29
10.20.24

A grown man was sleeping the morning away one Sunday when his mother burst into his room. In no uncertain terms she told him he had to get up and go to Mass. The man answered that he didn't like the church. He also didn't like the parishioners there and, it seems, they didn't like him. So he said to her, "give me one good reason why I should get up and go to Mass." She responded, "I'll give you three. First, the commandments tell us to keep holy the sabbath. Second, our Catholic faith teaches us that we keep the sabbath holy by participating in Mass each Sunday. **And third, you're the pastor of the parish.**"

Many times, it seems that things which are worthwhile and important require sacrifice. At times, that sacrifice might be accompanied by suffering. That suffering sometimes means experiencing pushback from others when we try doing what is good and right.

About ten years ago, a professional football player gave up his career in order to donate a kidney to his brother. Baltimore Ravens tackle Ma'ake Kemoueatu retired from football in order to help save his brother Chris' life by donating one of his kidneys to him. Ma'ake said he promised to take care of his younger brothers and sisters – and if it meant giving his blood or donating his kidney that's what he would do. Despite the physical pain and professional sacrifice Ma'ake was making, he knew that's what he had to do to extend the life of someone he loved.

If you've walked through our Fall Festival these past few days, I'm sure you've come across the many volunteers who made this event possible. All have sacrificed some portion of their time and leisure for this event. They didn't do so for their own recognition or glory. Rather, they do so to keep the Catholic education of their own children and other children in our school affordable. They remind us that by sacrificing their time and talent, they offer a better life for others. This year especially, their efforts enable our community to experience some sense of normalcy and a brief respite period from the two hurricanes which have torn through our area. Our Fall Festival this year is also striving to support and provide for those who are suffering. Yesterday the festival volunteers offered a free lunch to anyone on our community who asked for it. A portion of our Jackpot Drawing will go directly to our hurricane relief efforts right here in this community. And we are collecting goods for hurricane relief at the entrances to the festival.

Today's first reading from the prophet Isaiah speaks of that connection between sacrifice and salvation. In the selection we heard today at Mass, the prophet states, "(As) he gives his life as an offering for sin, he shall see his descendants in a long life, and the will of the Lord shall be accomplished through him.... Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many...." (Is. 53:10-11)

Of course we know that this prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. By Jesus' suffering, by offering his very self on the cross on our behalf, we experience forgiveness and are given a share in eternal salvation as we unite ourselves with him.

Jesus affirms this truth in today's gospel where he states, "whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant.... For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.... Through his suffering, my servant shall justify many" (Mk. 10:35-45).

Of course, Jesus didn't just talk the talk about how to live a holy life. He walked the walk of faith by giving up his very life for our sakes. In fact, Jesus continues to give of himself for our sakes and for our salvation each time we celebrate the Eucharist together. As we participate in the Mass, we are united with Christ's sacrifice on the cross; we are sustained by his Body and Blood; and we are fortified to live as servants for others as he did for us.

At the beginning of every new liturgical year in December, each of the readers at Mass are given a workbook. That book helps the reader as they prepare to proclaim the Good News at Mass. That book also gives a bit of background and teaching on each of the readings used at Mass on Sundays. Let me

conclude with a statement from that book about today's gospel proclaimed at Mass: "For Jesus, true greatness lies not in what one person can make another do, but in what one can either do or endure in order to make another free. Whether it is service...or death, in the mind of Christ greatness amounts to accepting any suffering for the sake of others" (Workbook for Lectors, p. 270)

That is what Christ has done and continues to do for us – showing us the way to the Father through his selfless service and even by means of his death on the cross. What are we willing to do – to give, to sacrifice, to suffer – for the sake of others? This reality is the core of our faith. It is also the measure with which Christ will judge us at the end of time.