



Immaculate Conception
Church

Homily for the Second Sunday of Lent

Year B 2015

Could there be a more powerful, difficult, and puzzling story than that of Abraham and his beloved son, Issac? Yet this story sums up the meaning of faith.

Consider the story carefully. Abraham has waited all his life for a child. Finally, at a time in life when children are not even considered a distant possibility, God miraculously gives Abraham and Sarah the gift of a son. No greater joy can come to Abraham as he watches the young Isaac grow and mature.

And then, without warning, God says to Abraham...I want your son...your only son, the one whom you love, the one that I gave you as a great promise, the son of your old age, the son who means everything to you. God wants the son back.

Can we even comprehend how Abraham felt as he began the three day journey to Mt. Moriah? Picture Abraham's journey with his son and servants -- knowing that this son who is trustingly traveling with him will soon experience the end of his life. And as they climb the mountain with the son carrying the wood for his own death, he asks his father "where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" "God will provide," is Abraham's answer.

And then, at the last minute, the angel catches Abraham's arm and says "no." God now knows the faith of Abraham and rewards that faith. God says to Abraham: "I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky."

The story of Abraham summarizes what one writer has named "the law of the gift." In the Bible the "law of the gift" teaches us that you increase in the measure that you give what you love away. By the same token you decrease in the measure that you keep what you love...that you hoard it for yourself.

This "law of the gift" flies in the face of common sense. After all, in our world if you want something, if you love something, you hang on to it, you cling to it, you grab it, you defend it. The last thing you would ever do, would be to give it away. The biblical law says no: if you want your life to be enriched, give it away. If you want to loose it, then cling to it.

God says to Abraham: I want you to give away that which you love the most. And when Abraham does this, everything about him increases.

For us, the story does not end with Abraham. For there is another son, the one whom God calls "my beloved son." And this son also carries the wood for the sacrifice up the hill of Calvary. Only in this case, God does not intervene but rather sacrifices Him for our sake. The anguish of Abraham now becomes the anguish of God the Father. But from this anguish, from this complete involvement with the "law of the gift," we are given new life, new hope.

In this Lenten Season the lesson for us is the lesson of the "law of the gift." In the measure that we imitate this law in our own life, in that measure will God bless us. When we are willing to think less of ourselves than of others, when we are willing to take a chance with ourselves, with our hearts, with our love, with our possessions, with our own security, then we are able to experience the blessings of the "law of the gift"....a law which makes no sense in our world but which makes the only sense in God's world.