

Mother Teresa of Calcutta spoke of sacrifice in this way: “A sacrifice to be real must cost, must hurt, and must empty ourselves.”

Today in the first reading, we hear of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac in the Hebrew commentaries, this is known as the binding of Isaac.

Early Christian sources use this text as a model of Abraham’s faith. And it is mentioned in the letter of James, the letter to the Hebrews, and in St. Irenaeus’ text *Against Heresy*.

The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, in more recent times, has seen faith as a remedy against the influences in thought that inspired Communism and Facism. Kierkegaard speaks of two types of sacrifice: that which is sacrificed for a higher good – a more secular sacrifice; and that which is sacrificed out of faith. The first sacrifice is reasonable, the second is not ... that is, the sacrifices that come from faith often do not seem to make sense. Kierkegaard calls them ‘absurd’ ... I would use the word outside of everyday reason.

In the Gospel, the religious leaders of Jesus’ time were struggling with what they saw. First Jesus tells the paralyzed man that his sins are forgiven. The religious leaders cannot let go of what they expect, and label this act ‘blasphemy.’ So then Jesus gives them something ‘absurd’ to see – he heals the man and tells him to pick up his bed and go.

Which is more ‘reasonable?’

It is in these ‘unreasonable’ sacrifices that we find a deeper cost, a deeper hurt, and a deeper emptying of ourselves. And in these sacrifices that come from a ‘leap of faith,’ we become more like our Savior Jesus Christ, who “though He was in the form of God, did not deem equality with God something to be grasped ... [but instead] ... emptied himself” of the appearances of His Divinity, eventually dying on the cross.

Let us unite our sufferings to those of Christ, no matter how small they may seem. And in our own emptying, in our own hurt, in our own cost ... let us know that we share in the one priesthood of Christ ... making our sacrifices to the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.