

A Mission Church

THE CLASH OF SACRIFICIAL SACRIFICE AND WEALTH & HAPPINESS IN THIS LIFE (Part 1)

We hear the gospel story about the rich putting into the temple treasury from their excess, and of the poor woman giving two coins, the last of her money, and we don't like it. The reasons for not liking this story are multiple. Usually, we associate ourselves to the characters in the teaching. If we associate with the poor widow, we find it unjust that the law would exact money from those who do not have.

And we reason that the wealthy should be assisting we who are not so well off.

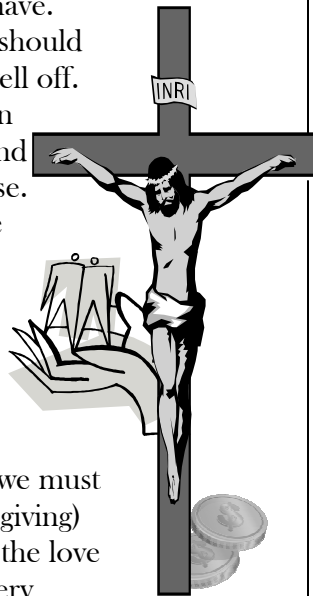
If we associate with the rich, then we often feel that we earned it and it belongs to us to do as we please.

So if I'm going to give to a cause or a need, or the Church, I'm going to do so according to how I want to give my time, talent and treasure. Very human reactions to a very real story.

To see this story clearly we must see sacrificial sacrifice (offering, giving) spiritually based, completely on the love of God we are to maintain in every aspect of our own lives — concerning our time, talent and treasure.

As is taught by the Church (see above), the only perfect sacrifice is that of Jesus Christ — God giving himself completely to us and for us in absolute love. Anything we may consider a sacrifice is to reflect God's complete giving. Sacrificial sacrifice (offering, giving) requires that our lives be established on the theological virtues pronounced in Paul's letter to the Corinthians: *"So faith, hope and love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love."* (1 Cor. 13:13) Our lives are to be based solely on the love offered us through Jesus Christ — perfect love, perfect giving, and our mirroring this love in our lives.

"I have told you this so that my joy might be in



It's All
About Love

SACRIFICE

It is right to offer sacrifice to God as a sign of adoration and gratitude, supplication and communion. "Every action done so as to cling to God in communion of holiness, and thus achieve blessedness, is a true sacrifice." (St. Augustine)

Outward sacrifice, to be genuine, must be the expression of spiritual sacrifice. "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit..." (Ps. 15:17) The prophets of the Old Covenant often denounced sacrifices that were not from the heart or not coupled with love of neighbor (see Am 5:2-25, Is 1:10-20). Jesus recalls the words of the prophet Hosea: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." (Mt 9:13, 12:7, Hos 6:6) The only perfect sacrifice is the one that Christ offered on the cross as a total offering to the Father's love and for our salvation. (see Heb 9:13-14) By uniting ourselves with his sacrifice we can make our lives a sacrifice to God.

— Catechism of the Catholic Church 2099, 2100

you and your joy might be complete. This is my commandment: Love one another as I love you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command... This is what I command: Love one another." (Jn 15:11-14, 27)

The greatest of these is love, because this virtue propels us into living what we profess for the sake of others, the imitation of God. God loves not for his own sake. God loves because that is his very nature. He cannot not love. In his giving us a share in his life, we are given what is necessary to love without boundaries as God loves without limitations. But you and I know that we place limitations and boundaries on our expressions of love, thereby, creating restrictions for our capacity to love or to know true love.

Sacrificial offering or sacrifice requires that the fruits of the Holy Spirit be shown in our lives. These fruits include charity (love), joy, peace, patience, kind-

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ness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity. But we rarely think of these as we go about our daily living, busy with the things of this world. The fruits of the Spirit are the end product of our loving.

Notice the fruit of JOY as an example. This is often realized with the virtue (fruit) of PEACE, and must reflect CHARITY, the love for oneness with God. True joy points to our believing that we are united, and being united to God at this very moment. True Joy is in knowing that I am helping others attain the kingdom even as I build it here. The sacrificial offering is in giving the time, the energy, the ability, the treasure for the sake of finding God's kingdom for myself and others.

If coming to Mass on the weekend is a sacrifice, we're in deep trouble.

If getting into the habit of prayer for others is a sacrifice and struggle, we're a hurting people.

If the giving of time to teach or assist in building up the parish, the body of Christ, or the giving of a talent is only done with arm-twisting, or monetary sharing is thought about only after personal wants, (giving from excess), then we better rethink the priority list we've set.

The Gospel of Luke is loaded with concerns for the "rich," for they have the power, position, prestige, and wealth to make a difference, yet fail to do so. For Luke, the message of salvation is directly related to how we seek the eternal kingdom and eliminate our concerns of abundance for this world. St. Matthew would have us using our gifts and riches to build up the kingdom here (such as is found in Chapters 5 and 25).

"There is still one thing left for you: sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." But when he heard this, he became quite sad, for he was very rich. Jesus looked at the rich official and said, 'How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.'" (Lk 18:22-26)

Sacrificial Sacrifice or Offering requires a universal understanding of God's love that touches the whole of the Body of Christ. It is giving and caring (joyfully because we can give) for the sake of others.

That's tough!

Sacrificial sacrifice is a planned action for the betterment of the whole of the Body of Christ (much of which has been heard recently in the reading of St. Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians. Spiritual Gifts are recognized through prayer and used for the whole, with no one part considered better than another, except for the head, which is Christ.

Examples of sacrificial sacrifice found in our local Church, our parish, include:

- the tithing of time, appropriating time when the parish requires the manpower. This may be in faithful commitment to a particular ministry or activity, without interruption, so as to serve others.
- tithing of talent, where God is given praise by our using the gifts we possess. Our cookie bakers, many limited by physical ability, provide a needed service so often. Most often, many of us use our talent in support of ourselves and our families — our jobs or avocations.
- tithing of money, giving first to God, and then setting forth to meet needs or planning for our desires. Jesus said, "Give all..." The scriptural basis says ten percent, which many people follow today.

Lastly, sacrificial giving requires trust; trust based on the promise of God that we will be provided for beyond our concerns in this world and the next.

There really are no guidelines or standards. It all happens because of true love of God and of neighbor, done before self, understanding that all we have or are is gift. For this, we will be accountable.

The pure heart will always lead the way.

Is this easy? Not at first.

Is it attainable? Yes.