

Homily - Second Sunday of Lent – February 28, 2021

Deacon Steve Livingston

There is an old saying that: “**Faith** is a journey ... **not** a destination”. Simply put ... it means that we must never become **stagnant** in our faith. We are meant to **learn** ... to **grow**. We are meant to continually **develop** and **nurture** our **relationship** with our loving God. And we are to do it as long as we **live**! We must keep moving **toward** God ... keep **learning** ... keep **growing**.

It has been so with **humanity** from the beginning. In the earliest days ... humans ... **recognized** that there was something ... **someone** ... **greater** than themselves ... someone that **created** them ... and the world they lived in. Motivated ... mostly by **fear** ... they knew that they must pay some sort of **homage** to this god ... or these gods ... or the crops would **not** grow or ... the **hunting** would be bad ... or the **women** would not bear children ... and all **kinds** of other misfortunes. They could not yet **grasp** the concept of an **all-loving** God ... so the image of an **angry tyrant** god prevailed ... a god ... or gods ... that must be **appeased** ... and of course ... that meant a **sacrifice**. Different civilizations practiced many different **types** of sacrifice but one in particular seemed to stand out ... that of **human sacrifice**!

Eventually God began to reveal Himself to humankind ... and some of His earliest and most **significant** revelations came through Abraham. And we hear of a most **significant** revelation today. Abraham is going to sacrifice his son because it is what God asks of him. His heart is breaking! But **wait!** ... God **stays** his hand! And God **reveals** to him ... that he does **not** desire human sacrifice. God tells him ... “**Look** ... you want to offer a sacrifice? ... there’s a **ram** over there ... sacrifice **that** ... but **not** your son ... not another **person** ... I don’t want that!” Thus ... a **new** image of God begins to emerge. Many other revelations would be handed down to Abraham ... Moses ... Elijah and the others ... paving the way for that **perfect** sacrifice that would be freely **offered** by Jesus ... and lovingly **accepted** by his Father.

And even though **we** are the benefactors of that **perfect** Sacrifice ... we **still** hear ... especially in this **Lenten** season that **we** ... should sacrifice ... with acts of self denial ... prayer ... fasting ... almsgiving. And these are **worthy** sacrifices. But they tend ... **most** often ... not to last **beyond** Lent. So the question I always come to ... each and every **Lent** ... is **what** sacrifice ... what **conversion** ... is my God asking of **me**? And I have always found one prayer **especially** helpful. It comes to us from a homily by that modern day **martyr** ... St. Oscar Romero. To those of you who are **familiar** with this prayer ... I ask your indulgence ... for those of you who are not ... I **hope** you find it helpful.

“... It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only **beyond** our efforts, it is even beyond our **vision**. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny **fraction** of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is **complete**, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies **beyond** us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer **fully** expresses our faith.

No **confession** brings perfection. No **pastoral** visit brings wholeness. No **program** accomplishes the church's mission. No set of **goals** and **objectives** includes everything. **This** is what we are about. We plant the **seeds** that one day will grow. We **water** seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay **foundations** that will need further development. We provide **yeast** that produces far beyond **our** capabilities. We **cannot** do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in **realizing** that.

This enables us to do **something**, and to do it very **well**. It may be incomplete, but it is a **beginning**, a **step** along the way, an **opportunity** for the Lord's **grace** to enter and do the rest. We may **never** see the end results, but that is the **difference** between the master builder and the worker. **We** are workers, **not** master builders; **ministers**, **not** messiahs. We are **prophets** of a future not our own. Amen.”

“We **cannot** do everything, (but) ... **do ... something.**” ... **This** ... is our Lenten challenge ... our **sacrifice** ... our **permanent** conversion ... to change **something** ... to do **something** ... **not** necessarily a huge change ... but a change that will move us **forward** ... on **our** faith journeys ... always **closer** ... toward our **ultimate** destination ... to God himself!