

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Book of Genesis (Genesis 22:1-2, 9-11)

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love - Isaac - and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection ~ When faith takes a back seat to rational thinking and human feelings

The higher the intellect, the more difficult it is to submit the intelligent human mind to divine truths. The learned mind finds difficulty in believing God would ever ask Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac. To relieve this difficulty in their minds, they put the account of God's testing of Abraham into the category of myths or fables. They have forgotten it is only God who gives life, and only God who can take back life in whatever way He pleases. God is no respecter of human standards of righteousness. Righteousness belongs to God alone. Sin is an offence against God and exists only in relation to God (Psalm 51:4, CCC 1850). A teacher during a Catechism lesson asked her class of teenagers what they thought about God allowing the slaughter of the innocent babies in the Old Testament. A teenaged boy gave a simple answer: "The babies belonged to God, God took them back." As God has given freewill to every person, He may allow evil by evil doers but we can be sure God will use the innocent blood shed for the eternal good of souls (cf. Romans 8:28).

When we judge God or His Word or His action with human standards we fall into error. We fall into error from step one if we start judging God. In the proper scheme of things, it is never our place to judge God. God is God, and we are His creatures. However, as human nature is weak, very often we judge God as if He is another human being. But He is certainly not. His ways are inscrutable to us. Scripture tells us He alone is holy (i.e. perfect) and all human beings have fallen short of glory (i.e. sinful). We are totally dependent on God from our first breath to our last breath. The moment He withdraws His Spirit from our body we die – our last act of obedience to God. The act of judging God is like the pot criticizing the potter for the shape that it has. It is simply folly, not to mention a temptation to fall into the sin of pride. *It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what He says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature (CCC 150).* God is Truth (cf. John 14:6) and cannot deceive or be deceived (cf. Job 13:9).

Turning to the witnesses of our faith. There were many times in our life when our experiences of injustice, sufferings, evil, persecution and the darkness of the world seem to run contrary to our faith in Jesus Christ. No one is immune to God's testing. If He does not test us, how can we prove ourselves? Faith is useless and mere sentiment if not proven. The more favoured a person, the more God tests that person. Abraham was tested severely. Because of his faith, God blesses the nations through his descendants (cf. Genesis 22:18). Abraham became the father of all who believe. Our Blessed Mother Mary most perfectly embodies the obedience of faith. With steadfast faith, She stood by Jesus to the very last even though She never witnessed in Her lifetime the fulfillment of the great promises of God conveyed through Archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation. Jesus was tested in a way that no human being will ever be tested. And He is God's only begotten beloved Son!

Faith is a divine gift which is up to us to receive. When Simon Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus said that it was God the Father who revealed this truth to Peter (cf. Matthew 16:16-17). Faith is a gift from God who wants everyone to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4). However, faith is also a human voluntary act. We cannot receive this gift from God if we decide not to believe. *Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand (St Augustine of Hippo).*

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, righteousness is solely Yours, and I err if I judge Your Word or Your action. Through my pride and human standards, it will not be easy for me to fully understand Your ways but I resolve to be a true disciple of Yours in spite of my weaknesses. When I exercise true faith, I stand in Your righteousness. Give me holy boldness to stand up for the truth even in the face of adversity and unpopularity. At the end of my day on earth, I know it is only to You alone that I have to give an account of my life. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me to have a steadfast simple faith. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.