



Love for One Another

The Lenten season encourages me to think about the word sacrifice. I am not referring to the meaning that describes a sacrifice as the slaughtering of an animal to be offered up as found in the bible or practiced within cultural traditions. I want to reflect on what it means to make a sacrifice in our world today solely out of love for one another.

For the purpose of this reflection let's work from the following definition of sacrifice by Merriam-Webster, "*the act of giving up something that you want to keep especially in order to get or do something else or to help someone*". To sacrifice something you prize for the benefit of another has the power to lift their spirit and yours, too. There is a hidden gift that comes back to you when you make a sacrifice. When you unselfishly give your time, your money, or your resources for the benefit of another human being you gain far more than you sacrifice. Your capacity for love grows.

Consider the parent who welcomes a new baby home. This scenario is filled with sacrifice. In the years to come the parent will give up sleep to tend to the baby's needs in the middle of the night, give up going out to dinner to save money to provide food, clothing, and eventually education for this child, and will likely give up sleep again waiting for him/her to return home after a night out with friends. Out of pure love a parent will make sacrifices for the benefit of the child's future and in the process love will grow.

Is this kind of sacrifice diminishing in our world today? I often see sacrifices being evaluated in relation to personal gain. There seems to be a "what's in it for me" attitude when a sacrifice has to be made and if there is no tangible personal gains then people are not willing to make the sacrifice. Relationships are torn apart when no one is willing to make a sacrifice. In the case of a child someone has to give up something or the child will not grow and thrive. The same is true in our communities for our elderly population or those living alone who have difficulty caring for their own needs. When we are not willing to give up personal time or resources without personal gain for their benefit our community begins to fall apart and love does not grow.

Sacrifice is a result of pure love. The world we live in cannot afford an attitude of "someone else will do it". We must work together each of us making sacrifices along the way for the betterment of the world. We read in the New Living Translation of the Bible, I John 3:18, "Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; let us show it by our actions". When we make a sacrifice in our life for the sake of someone else we are showing love for them through our actions.

As I prepare for the Easter season and hear the Easter story I can only begin to imagine the love present in the sacrifice Jesus made for us. His was the greatest act of love; his life given so that we might have eternal life.

Let there be no resentment for the daily sacrifices you make for your family, your friends, and your community for they hold life's greatest gift. Embrace the hidden gift in sacrifice, the capacity for love to grow. Then your actions will show your love for one another.

Questions to ponder:

- When was the last time I made a sacrifice for the sole benefit of another?
- What sacrifices have most greatly deepened my capacity to love?
- Who has made a sacrifice in their life for my benefit? How can I thank them?

May God's Peace Be Yours,
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