

2 – OFFERING YOURSELF TO GOD

Fr. Terry Donahue, CC – Parish Mission – March 4, 2013

I. Commitment to Jesus as Lord

A. Returning love for love

Once we come to believe in the love of Jesus for us, love calls for love. “If you have been loved like this, you must love in return, give love for love. ‘I have loved you; you must love. I have given you my Heart without reserve, in order to have your heart without reserve. I have put no limit on my love; you must put no limit on yours.’” (Fr. Jean C. d’Elbée, *I Believe in Love*, 13-14)

B. Personal Commitment to Jesus as Lord

1) *We personally acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus*

The first response of a disciple to Christ is to personally acknowledge his Lordship. The Constitutions of the Companions of the Cross make this clear: “Jesus Christ is Lord! Christ crucified has been exalted by the Father to be the Lord of all Creation. In response, every member is to declare himself personally under the total Lordship of Jesus Christ, and to live out this commitment in conscious daily submission to him as Saviour and Lord.” (Companions of the Cross, *Constitutions & Rules*, C27)

2) *We belong to Jesus by choice*

“We have been tantalized by Jesus. We have been fascinated by him, dazzled. We have been trapped and captured. We are prisoners of the Lord. But we are delighted to be in his custody. We would not want it any other way. We are able to say with St. Paul that we have reappraised all else as rubbish in the light of knowing Christ Jesus, that we are now racing to capture the prize for which he has captured us (Phil 3:12)” (Fr. Bob Bedard, *Companions of the Cross*, 141)

3) *We become disciples of Jesus*

“Not only does Jesus call us to be saved; he calls us to be his disciples as well. Being a disciple of the Lord is... entering into friendship with God... taking on his burden... getting involved with him in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Uniting with the Lord, co-operating with him and doing his work – that’s what the Lord wants from us. He wants us to be disciples. He wants us to follow him with all our hearts and souls, and to make everything over to him... Disciples were not just members of the crowd, but rather those who had made the decision to follow him completely.” (Fr. Bob Bedard CC, *The Catholic Disciple*, 156)

“Once we see Jesus for who he really is, there is only one response that makes sense – total. Anything else is insane. Once we have set out on the road to full discipleship and opted to live it out every day, we are at the starting point. It is not the end of the line. It is just the beginning.” (Fr. Bob Bedard CC, *The Catholic Disciple*, 97)

C. Total Surrender

1) **Surrender is the key to letting the Lord move powerfully in our lives:**

“As we surrender our lives and everything we do to him, give him full permission to do with us as he wills, make ourselves completely available to him, and are committed totally to his purposes we clear the way for him to accomplish his will.” (Fr. Bob Bedard, as quoted in *Companions of the Cross, Constitutions & Rules*, C23)

2) This is spoken of in the Scriptures as the “obedience of faith”

Obedience of faith = “a commitment of your whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals.” (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 5, cf. Rom 1:4-6, 16:26)

3) Surrender directly and concretely affects the way I live my life:

“To follow Jesus as my Lord means placing everything at his disposal: my life, my position, my possessions, my plans, my decisions – everything. He will be the one that that I will now submit to in all things. Just as he himself said “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me” (John 4:34) – likewise will my number-one priority become to accomplish his purposes.” (Fr. Bob Bedard, *Companions of the Cross*, 142)

Fr. Bob summed it up: “Give God permission.” “Whatever you want me to do Lord, I will do it.” We invite God to act in our lives, our hearts and our relationships in any way He wants. This is not just something we do once in a while – it is a way of relating to God all the time.

II. Humble Confidence – St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Fr. Jean d’Elbée asks, “How do you give Jesus love for love? Before all and above all, by your confidence in Him. This word, *confidence*, summarizes the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity... the greatest heroism is demanded of us in order to realize them in the face of the mystery of a ‘hidden God’.” (*I Believe in Love*, 25)

A. The ‘Little Way’ of St. Thérèse

St. Therese looked at the lives of the saints and wanted to be holy like them, but saw such a great difference between herself and them. But she didn’t get discouraged:

“The good God would not inspire unattainable desires. I can, then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to sanctity. For me to become greater is impossible. I must put up with myself just as I am with all my imperfections. But I wish to find the way to go to Heaven by a very straight, short, completely new little way.

We are in a century of inventions: now one does not even have to take the trouble to climb the steps of a stairway; in the homes of the rich an elevator replaces them nicely. I, too, would like to find an elevator to lift me up to Jesus, for I am too little to climb the rough stairway of perfection.

So I have looked in the books of the saints for a sign of the elevator that I long for, and I have read these words proceeding from the mouth of eternal Wisdom: ‘He that is a little one, let him turn to me’ (Prov 9:16). So I came, knowing that I had found what I was seeking, and wanting to know, O my God, what You would do with the little one who would answer Your call, and this is what I found:

‘As one whom the mother caresses, so will I comfort you. You shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees they shall caress you’ (Isaiah 66:12-13). Never have more tender words come to make my soul rejoice. The elevator which must raise me to the heavens is Your arms, O Jesus! For that I do not need to grow; on the contrary, I must necessarily remain small, become smaller and smaller. O my God, You have surpassed what I expected, and I want to sing Your mercies.” (St. Therese of Lisieux, *Manuscripts autobiographiques – The Story of a Soul*, 244, as quoted in *I Believe in Love*, 26-28)

B. The ‘Little Way’ of St. Thérèse

St. Therese of Lisieux defined sanctity as “a disposition of heart which makes us humble and small in the arms of God, conscious of our weakness, and confident to the point of audacity in the goodness of our Father.” (*Novissima Verba*, 112, as quoted in *I Believe in Love*, 20)

C. Scriptural Examples of Humble Confidence (*I Believe in Love*, 34-39)

We see this combination of humility and confidence in so many encounters with Jesus:

- 1) **The Prodigal Son:** (Luke 15:11-32) This ungrateful son demands his inheritance from his Father (I wish you were dead), wastes it all and ends up miserable. But he remembers the goodness of his father!"I shall rise up and go to my father!" → Confidence. "I have sinned" → Humility. "The desire of the Father of Mercies to retrieve His lost child and give him life! That is the Heart of God!... In a living faith you will not approach the confessional with dragging feet, but as if you were going to a feast, even if you have to make a great effort each time to humble yourself... After the absolution, you should dance like the prodigal son did... We do not dance enough in the spiritual life." (*I Believe in Love*, 34)
- 2) **The Good Thief**– "We have received what we deserve" → Humility. "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." → Confidence! "Amen, amen, I say to you, this day you shall be with me in paradise" (cf. Luke 23:39-43).
- 3) **The Canaanite woman** –A pagan foreigner with no 'right' to the Messiah's ministry asks Jesus to cure her daughter who is possessed. Jesus puts her off, and she accepts this → Humility. Jesus tests her faith further, saying: "The bread of the children is not to be given to the dogs." CW: "But even the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table." → Confidence. Jesus is conquered: "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done to you as you will." (Matt 15:21-28)

Fr. Jean suggests Jesus was thinking: "You have stolen my Heart; you have stolen my will from me by your faith filled with love. I can refuse you nothing." (*I Believe in Love*, 38)

- You should have "confidence in proportion to your humility because it is to the extent that we realize our need of Jesus that we have recourse to Him, and we sense this need to the extent that we justly realize our unworthiness." (*I Believe in Love*, 37)

4) **The Centurion**

"As he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, beseeching him and saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress.'

And he said to him, 'I will come and heal him.'

But the centurion answered him, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.

For I am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it.'

When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith...

And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go; be it done for you as you have believed.' And the servant was healed at that very moment." (Matt 8:5-10,13)

"Jesus is amazed. This is the only time the word 'amazed' is used of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel. The only thing to amaze the Son of God is this Gentile's great faith."

(Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 127)

D. Unworthiness and Confidence

After the Fraction Rite in the Mass we say, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. But only say the word, and my soul shall be healed.” (*Roman Missal*)

1) This is a recognition of the *authority* of Jesus.

“We recognize that Jesus *is* Lord, and so all that it takes is His mighty word and our souls... *will in fact* be healed of all unworthiness such that He can, and indeed will, enter.” (Louie Verrecchio, “Lord, I Am Not Worthy,” July 24, 2010, <http://catholicexchange.com/lord-i-am-not-worthy/>)

“Like the centurion, we acknowledge our unworthiness to have Jesus enter under the roof of our souls. Yet... we trust that Jesus can heal us as he becomes the most intimate guest of our soul in Holy Communion.” (Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 127)

2) In that moment, exercise your faith!

- Confidently proclaim that Jesus *is* Lord, that all it takes is one mighty word from Him and our souls *will in fact be healed!* And then Jesus does enter under our roof, Body and Blood!

“In the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom the faithful pray in the same spirit:

‘O Son of God, bring me into communion today with your mystical supper. I shall not tell your enemies the secret, nor kiss you with Judas' kiss. But like the good thief I cry, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’” (CCC 1386)

E. Repeated falls

1) When we fall again and again, we are tempted to get discouraged.

“After a man falls and sees himself on the ground, rather than simply recognizing his own weakness and impotence, and remaining in peace, he concludes, ‘I shall never succeed. I give up. It is useless.’ That is really rebellious discouragement. The one who is truly childlike is not surprised that he stumbles. He falls and picks himself up again without wearying, each time more determined to attain his goal.” (*I Believe in Love*, 129-130)

St. Therese says, “I am not always faithful, but I never get discouraged. I abandon myself into the arms of Jesus, and there I find again all that I have lost and much more besides.” (St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Letter of July 18, 1893, as quoted in *I Believe in Love*, 42)

2) We get tired of it.

“We have all had this temptation at one time or another. ‘I have promised Him so much, I have made so many resolutions and I always fall again; it is impossible that he does not get tired of it.’ It is a kind of blasphemy to say that, because it is to limit a mercy which has no limit. It is to doubt the patience, the indulgence, the untiring clemency of Jesus. It is not He who grows weary of us. It is we who grow weary of looking at our ugliness.” (*I Believe in Love*, 62)

Ex. Boxing Match Analogy

3) The solution is humble confidence in the mercy of God. Trust in the goodness of God.

St. Therese writes, “...even if I had on my conscience all the sins which can be committed, I would go, my heart broken, to repent and throw myself into the arms of Jesus, for I know how much He cherishes the prodigal child who returns to Him. It is not because the dear Lord in His provident mercy has preserved my soul from mortal sin that I am lifted up to Him by confidence and love.” (*Manuscripts autobiographiques – The Story of a Soul*, 313, in *I Believe in Love*, 30)

- Did Jesus complain, ‘You of little discipline’? ‘You lacking solid character’? No! He complained, “You of little faith!” (Matt 8:26). Exercise your faith and God will give you these other virtues besides.

“Jesus says to you now, ‘Do you believe that I can purify you in a moment and wipe from your soul every trace of sin?’ ‘Yes, Lord, I believe.’ ‘Then it is done,’ replies the Lord, ‘because you believe, because you do not doubt it, because you know enough to cling to my infinite mercy, because you remember how I treated the prodigal son, the good thief, the woman of Canaan [and the Centurion’s servant] when they vanquished me by their humility and confidence’... [Because you believe,] you will see the power of my Heart in the magnificence of my love.” (*I Believe in Love*, 44-45)

D. Failing in our Lenten penitential practices

“Then there is the cross of having carried the cross badly... How many times someone has told me, ‘I had made a resolution to be generous in suffering. Then a trial came. I balked, even rebelled. How many merits I lost!’ Thus we add to our original cross that of having carried it badly. It is here we return to the words of little Therese: “We would like to suffer generously. We would like never to fall – what an illusion!” See what a lack of logic this is: to moan about having moaned and then to go on moaning! No! Say to Jesus, “Now I accept the cross You have sent me, which I at first rejected, and I accept not having accepted it right away.” That is the great resource of humble confidence pushed to its extreme.” (*I Believe in Love*, 209-210)

“Confidence, confidence without limits, full, filial, total, all-inclusive.” (*I Believe in Love*, 51)

III. Giving to God in the Eucharistic Sacrifice

The Mass is primarily the work of God. We participate, we celebrate, but God is the one who makes it happen, who accomplishes this great Sacrament.

A. The Sacrifice of Jesus

- 1) In the Mass, God makes present to us, here and now, the Death & Resurrection of Jesus. We are just as present to the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross and His glorious resurrection as were Mary, John the Apostle, and the holy women. Every Mass is a re-presentation of His sacrificial death and Resurrection!
- 2) The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross is the one, eternal, perfect sacrifice. Jesus’ sacrificial death cleanses us from our sins and reconciles us to God the Father.
- 3) All the grace and mercy that was poured out in the death of Christ is available to us, right here and now, and to every time and place.

B. The Perpetuation of the Sacrifice

1) The sacrifice of Calvary and the Eucharist are the same event!

“The Mass makes present the sacrifice of the Cross; it does not add to that sacrifice nor does it multiply it.” (*Council of Trent*, session XXII)

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice.” (CCC 1367)

Ex. This truth was brilliantly portrayed in the movie “The Passion of the Christ”. During the crucifixion scenes there were flashbacks to the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, showing that we are present to the passion of Jesus at every Mass.

- The Eucharist makes present the one perfect sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise pleasing to the Father.

2) The Eucharist makes Calvary present to us. - How does God accomplish this?

- Jesus ascended into heaven and is seated “at the right of the throne of Divine Majesty in the heavens” (Heb 8:1). There “He lives forever to make intercession” for us (Heb 7:25).

- As the “supreme high priest over all the house of God” (Heb 10:19), Jesus is standing before the Father offering His own sacrifice to the Father for us. For forgiveness, mercy, grace...
- He died only once 2000 years ago, but is forever offering this to the Father for our salvation. Therefore we call it an eternal sacrifice.
- As both the Priest (who makes the offering) and the Victim (who is offered), Jesus is giving Himself, offering Himself to the Father for you and for me, at this very moment!

C. The Eucharist joins us to the Liturgy of Heaven

This Great liturgy is happening right now in heaven. When we celebrate Mass, God “parts the veil” between heaven and earth and we join the Liturgy of heaven! We enter into and become part of that one eternal sacrifice of Jesus to the Father.

- This is why we say in the preface of the Eucharistic Prayer that we “join the angels and saints in their triumphant hymn of praise.” It is not that they join us... *We join them* in crying “Holy, Holy, Holy” to God and the Lamb!
 “...we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints” (Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 8)

D. Eucharist as Memorial Sacrifice

1) The Last Supper

At the Last Supper, Jesus said to the Apostles, “*Do this in memory of me.*” In English, the word memory just means “calling to mind a past event”. But in the Scriptures, the Greek word for remembrance, *anamnesis*, connotes much more than this:

[*Anamnesis* is connected to covenant sacrifice in Heb 10:3, Lev 24:7, Num 10:10 and Psalm 38 & 70). It is used in relation to the Eucharist in Luke 22:19 and 1 Cor 11:24.]

“For the Jew, particularly in regard to the Passover Meal, remembering is not so much a going back to the original event, but rather is a process by which they bring the event from the past into the present and relive it as if it were happening right now.” (Msgr. Thomas Rowland, *God Acts, We React: An Approach to Liturgical Prayer*, p. 85)

2) Jesus is the High Priest and Victim of every Mass

“It is Christ himself, the eternal high priest of the New Covenant who, acting through the ministry of the priests, offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. And it is the same Christ, really present under the species of bread and wine, who is the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice.” (CCC 1410)

3) Jesus offers Himself and us to the Father

- We are asking the Father to accept the One sacrifice truly pleasing to Him: Jesus, His Son, on our behalf. But there is more yet. It is not just Jesus who is offered to the Father.
- It is the whole Body of Christ, Head and members, and who are the members? We are.
- So in the Mass Jesus unites us to Himself, and offers us to the Father along with His saving sacrifice, and we are made one with our Father in heaven.
- We specifically ask the Lord to accept us, our sacrifice, at the offertory:
 - “PRIEST: Pray brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.
 - “PEOPLE: May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of His name, for our good and the good of all His holy Church.” (*Roman Missal*)

- Our lives, too, in union with Jesus, become an acceptable sacrifice to the Father. This should fill our hearts with “profound amazement and gratitude.” John Paul II called this “Eucharistic amazement” at the mystery of faith (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 5).

4. The Eucharist is the sacrifice of the Church

“The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to his intercession with the Father for all men. In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value.” (CCC 1368)

- The faithful join in the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

“Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It.” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11, cf. Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*)

- The faithful can do this because through Baptism they share in the *priesthood of all believers*. This is different in nature (not just degree) from the *ministerial priesthood* without which there can be no Eucharist!

E. Holy Communion

1) Communion with Jesus

- In the Eucharist, we encounter Christ most perfectly and are united with His life-giving sacrifice on the Cross and the power of His Resurrection. All grace was merited by the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross and flows from his glorified Risen humanity in heaven.
- The act of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ puts us into living communion with the *Person* of Jesus. We don’t receive a dead Jesus! He is not a corpse. He is alive! We receive the risen and glorified Body of Christ in holy communion.
- We receive the risen life of Jesus. We are infused with God’s own life, which is indestructible and eternal. This is why St. Ignatius of Antioch said that the Eucharist “is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote to prevent us from dying, but [which causes] that we should live for ever in Jesus Christ” (Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians*, 20:2).
- In the Eucharist God applies the fruits of the Cross & Resurrection to every time and place (cf. CCC 1366). By receiving our Lord in holy communion, we share in these fruits:

2) Fruits of Holy Communion

a. “*Holy Communion augments our union with Christ.*” (CCC 1391)

- It is a deep intimate union with Christ, a resting on the heart of the Lord like the beloved disciple at the Last Supper.
- There is no possible closer union with Jesus this side of heaven. If you were to have an apparition of Jesus and he were standing right next to you, that is nothing compared to the communion you have with Him in receiving the Eucharist.

“Oh, if we could rightly understand how Jesus Christ loves to come into our heart! Once He is there he would wish never to go away; he cannot part from us again, either during life or after death.” (St. John Vianney, *Sermons*, ii, pp. 251-252, as quoted in *Eucharistic Meditations – Extracts from the Writings and Instructions of Saint John Vianney*, p. 72)

- St. Thérèse of Lisieux described her first Holy Communion with these words:

“What comfort it brought to me, that first kiss our Lord imprinted on my soul! A Lover’s kiss; I knew that I was loved, and I in return, told Him that I loved Him, and was giving myself to Him for all eternity. And now something had melted away, and there were no longer two of us - Therese had simply disappeared, like a drop lost in the ocean; Jesus only was left, my Master and my King.” (*Autobiography of a Soul*, p. 232)

b. *“Holy Communion separates us from sin.”* (CCC 1393)

- Received worthily, the Eucharist wipes away all venial sin and strengthens us against mortal sin. It strengthens us to fight the world, the flesh, and the devil.

c. *Holy Communion fills us with the Holy Spirit.*

- St. Ephraim said, “[Jesus] called the bread his living body and he filled it with himself and his Spirit... He who eats it with faith, eats Fire and Spirit... Take and eat this, all of you, and eat with it the Holy Spirit” (*Sermo IV in Hebdomadam Sanctam*, 55).
- God the Father said to St. Catherine of Siena, “By receiving this sacrament... I leave behind the imprint of my grace, just as a seal that is pressed into warm wax leaves its imprint when it is lifted off. Thus does the power of this sacrament remain there in the soul, the warmth of my divine love, the mercy of the Holy Spirit remains there... The soul is left strong, sharing in my strength and power...” (*The Dialogue of Catherine of Siena*, “A Treatise of Prayer - Of the excellent state of the soul who receives the sacrament in grace”)

d. *Holy Communion fills us with interior joy.*

“When you have had the happiness of receiving the good God, you feel for some time a gladness, a balm in your heart... Pure souls are always like that; and this union is their strength and happiness. O man, how happy you are, but how little you understand your happiness! If you understood it you could not live... No, surely you could not live... You would die of love! This God gives Himself to you, you can take him away if you will, where you will, He is one with you! Ah! a heart once clasped in the pure embrace of its Saviour could find no other happiness than in Him!” (St. John Vianney, *Esprit*, pp. 139,148, as quoted in *Eucharistic Meditations – Extracts from the Writings and Instructions of Saint John Vianney*, pp. 77-78)

- [Notes: “Pure souls are always like that...” - Vianney does not mean that every worthy reception of communion will result in sensible consolations, but that communion increases our interior joy that only Christ can give. “...no other happiness than in Him” – This does not mean that other things will not give us joy, but that authentic joy we find in all good things finds its origin in Christ.]

e. *Holy Communion is the fuel to the fire of evangelization.*

- We are sent from the Eucharist into the world to carry on the mission of Christ. Like Mary we receive Jesus (the Annunciation) and then carry Him to the world (the Visitation, Nativity, etc.). God fills us, empowers us, and sends us forth.

Ex. At Mass, the dismissal in Latin is *Ite missa est*. This is translated “Go forth, the Mass is ended.” An alternative dismissal is “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”

Closing Prayer

... Lord, my heart is in need of You.
The depths of my heart cry out for You.
I wish to open myself completely to You.
I desire that You penetrate me completely,
That I belong to You,
That you enter my heart.
I desire that only You dwell there.
I desire to love You eternally.
Fill me with Your holy love.
Strengthen me and be with me always.
May Your Holy Name be praised.

...
Allow us to become aware of what is important,
To not lose ourselves, but to gain You.
You are the only center of our lives.
Only with You can I know what and who I am.
Come, Lord... My heart is waiting for You. ...
Amen.”

(Excerpted from “Prayer of Surrender”
by Fr. Zlatko Sudac, www.fathersudacretreats.com)