

This story we hear of Abraham today is known in Judaism as the *Akedah*, meaning 'binding', referring to the 'binding of Isaac'. It's a story that disturbs our modern sensibilities: making us think of God as cruel, like a cat playing with a mouse. How could God command a parent to sacrifice their own child? But that's not the point of *The Binding of Isaac*.

Most of us know something about Abraham, sometimes referred to as the father of the Jewish people. Eleven generations after Noah, he was born in a distant place called Ur of the Chaldees, into a culture that had no concept of the one God. He had only known the many gods of his culture, having no awareness of the God who had strolled with Adam and Eve through the garden; who had instructed Noah to build an ark.

Yet within him, God's voice whispered, "*Abram, go forth from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you.*" It would be like saying, "*Give away your house, quit your job, and take your wife and relatives to a far-away location that I will reveal to you at a later time.*" Yet Abraham trusted and went.

Throughout his life, despite all sorts of unforeseen crises, Abraham kept following, even when it still wasn't clear how God would bless him and make of him a great nation, nor where exactly they would settle. At long last, he was given a son by his wife Sarah, and the child was named Isaac. Finally, a beautiful and tangible sign that God would uphold his promise....a son, an heir to the promise, the one who would give way to this eventual 'great nation'. His son.

Years later, when Isaac had become a young man, God said to Abraham, "*Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you.*" Think about it: not just a son: his *only* son, whom he loved. Abraham must have thought "*Really? You finally give me something I love, a sign of your elusive promise....and I have to give it back? Why?*"

From the earliest centuries, Christians have seen a correlation between *The Binding of Isaac* and *the Passion of Jesus*. Both involve the sacrifice of a son, a beloved son. Secondly, as Jesus walked up the hill called Golgotha, carrying the wood of the cross on which he was to be sacrificed, so Isaac ascended Mt. Moriah, carrying the wood over which he was to be laid as a sacrifice. Third, as the eventual sacrifice on Moriah was a ram, saving the young man, Isaac, so the sacrifice of the Lamb of God would save mankind. And fourth, as Abraham trusted in God, that something good would come from offering his son as an oblation, so God trusted that something good will come from the oblation that was *His Son*.

As St. Paul says, "*He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?*" If God did that for us, how will He not see it through to provide what we truly need? And that's the point of this story, the *Akedah*. It's not about the sacrifice of a child; it's about Abraham's complete trust in God to provide, so much that he would surrender anything. *If I have God, all will be well*. As St. Teresa of Avila once said, "*Solo Dios basta*" (*God alone suffices*).

I've heard it said, that if there is something besides God that we believe is absolutely necessary to our happiness, then we've made an idol or god of it (Peter Kreeft, *How to Be Holy*, p. 138). It's not that these things or people have no value. But to be clear, these things have value because they're from God, but also in whatever way that they reflect God's goodness to us.

For all the ways it's hard to trust in God—that we cling to mere things and even people, that make us feel secure, valued....even to the point of making idols of them, maybe it's because we haven't sufficiently understood what he was willing to lay down on the cross, and what he wanted to us to receive from it. Perhaps understanding that is the key to detachment, to truly becoming free—even while loving the people God has put into our lives and being grateful for the things we have. Hard as detachment is, I know St. Theresa has to be right: *Solo Dios basta*.

And like Abraham and our Lord Himself, let us offer to God the people, the things, the causes that give our lives meaning—placing them on this altar, spiritually speaking, with the bread and wine: a sacrifice of sorts, rendering them holy. And in offering it all to God, trusting in the good that He will make of it.