

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT—Year B—M03-D14-Y2021

01. **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son...”**
With these **powerful and profound words**, Jesus makes the connection between love and sacrifice — how the Father **so loved the world—so loved each of us—that He gave His only Son, His very Self, His very Heart for our salvation.**
02. This is still something that the world doesn't fully understand—**that love is not just a bunch of nice feelings that one has for another, but that love is sacrifice** — that love and sacrifice are, in fact, two sides of the same coin — and that **sacrifice is only possible BECAUSE of suffering and death.**
03. Because God in His infinite Wisdom saw clearly, what is often difficult for us to see in this life—that suffering and death is **THE GREATEST expression of the highest form of love that there is—SACRIFICIAL LOVE** — and that **WITHOUT** suffering and death there would be **NO SUCH THING** as sacrificial love — **for as Jesus Himself once said: *there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.***
04. In other words, it's **only THROUGH suffering and death that sacrificial love is truly realized.** Because when someone is willing to sacrifice for us—when someone loves us **to the point that it costs them everything—everything that they have to give — to the point that they lay down their lives for us—it is then, and ONLY THEN, that the depth of a person's love for us is truly revealed.**
05. This is certainly the case with the Crucifixion— and why *the Son of Man had to be lifted up*—**because** Jesus' Sacrifice on the Cross **revealed to the world the depth of His Love for the Father, and the depth of His Love for us**—because, **AGAIN**, it is in the midst of suffering and death that authentic love is truly revealed.
06. This is one of the reasons why Jesus **chose suffering and death as the means by which to save us.** He could have chosen any way to redeem us—but **Jesus chose the way that would cost Him the most and reveal the depth of His love for us.**

07. And so, allowing Himself to suffer and die, costs Jesus **ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING**—everything that He had to give—**everything that is POSSIBLE for Him to give.**
08. And in allowing Himself to suffer and die, **Jesus not only showed us the depth of HIS LOVE—He also showed us the TRUE nature of love—as well as the beauty and the power of sacrificial love** — for the magnitude of His sacrifice forever changed the world for the better.
09. And, in being lifted up, Jesus **has transformed the ultimate symbol of pain and death into the ultimate symbol of love.** And this is one of the reasons why God allows suffering and death to exist in the first place—because, **AGAIN**, without them, **you would not have the highest form of love that there is—sacrificial love.**
10. There's an old saying which claims that the Angels envy us because we can do something that they can't — **that is we can suffer for the love of God, and for the love of others—and thus experience the beauty of sacrificial love.**
11. And so, as much as we have an aversion to suffering and death—and as much as it's actually a good thing that we do—**God calls us to embrace these realities, not in a morbid sense, but in order to demonstrate and actualize our love for Him and for others.**
12. Because in so doing, when **we give ALL that we have to God—when we truly lay down our lives for the love of God and neighbor—we too will change the world for the better.**
13. And laying down our lives doesn't necessarily mean a physical death and physical martyrdom—but rather, **the most profound kind of death and martyrdom that there is—the death to self** — that is death to being the centre of our own universe—**death to having everyone around us meet our expectations—death to always getting our own way—death to having our own will be done and our own kingdom** — because the true test of sacrificial love does not necessarily involve **laying down our lives in big, dramatic ways—but in small and simple ways—dying to self, day after day, moment after moment, for the love of God and others.**

14. One of the best movies in the last little while that shows us the beauty and power of sacrificial love is **a low budget film that got a lot of attention and ended up making a lot of money**—a movie I'm sure many of you have heard of, but might not have seen—**a movie called: *A Quiet Place*.**
15. It's a movie that, in some ways, reminds me a lot of what we're going through during this pandemic—**because it's about people having to radically alter the way they live because of the emergence of mysterious and deadly entities**—entities which force people to live in a world COMPLETELY DEVOID of sound.
16. Although the premise is really out there—**the film is very effective in the way it depicts what life would be like, if we were unable to make ANY SOUND whatsoever.** And although it would be considered a horror film—at the heart of the movie is the story of a family, **who's parents make enormous sacrifices for the safety of their children—**completely turning their lives upside down—**and doing whatever it takes to protect their children from the mysterious and deadly entities.**
17. And in a way, isn't this one of the themes of this pandemic—**how we've had to make enormous sacrifices for the safety of those we love—how we've had to turn our lives upside down to protect those we love from a mysterious and deadly virus** — and so, maybe one of the good things that will result from this pandemic, is that **we will gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the highest form of love that there is—sacrificial love.**
18. One of the things that I have often wondered about is **why did the Father send the Son—why did the Father not come Himself?** After reflecting on this question, I have come to believe that the Father sent the Son because He was sending **what was most precious to Him—what would COST Him the most.**
19. In other words, in sending us His Son, and in having His Son suffer and die—**cost the Father MORE than if He had become man Himself and undergone the Crucifixion Himself** — for Jesus is not only the eternal

Word of the Father, and the only-begotten Son of the Father—Jesus is **THE VERY HEART of the Father** — and in giving us His Son, the Father is giving us is very Heart — and **whatever was done to the Son here on earth, was done to the very Heart of the Father.**

20. For as any parent will tell you it's much more painful **to watch their children suffer—than any suffering they can endure themselves— for to love someone is to truly suffer with them.**
21. Moreover, in giving us His only Son, **the Father has given us His very Self—everything that He is, and everything that He has** — meaning that the Father **can't give us any more of Himself than He does in Jesus**—and the Father can't do any more for us than He did in sending His Son to be our Saviour.
22. And so, for all these reasons, **the Crucifixion doesn't only reveal the infinite love of the Son for us—but the infinite love of the Father as well.**
23. And this is a good thing because I think that often people **question the love of the Father—wondering what kind of God would sacrifice His Son.** And I think that the Father is often **the most misunderstood Person of the Blessed Trinity—the one that people have the most trouble relating to.**
24. But just as the Crucifixion reveals the very Heart of the Son—the Crucifixion reveals the very Heart of the Father, and the true nature of the Father as well—a **kind, merciful, and compassionate God Who gives us everything that He can possibly give.**
25. The people of Jesus' time did not want a suffering Messiah—they **wanted a Messiah that would TAKE AWAY their sufferings**—a political and militaristic Messiah who would bring an end to their suffering at the hands of the Romans.
26. And I think it's very much the same today. The world is **not all interested in a suffering Messiah—in a God Who suffers with us and for us** — the world is only interested in a Messiah that will bring an end to suffering—**because the world sees no value at all in the mystery of suffering.**

27. And this is why St. Paul says that **the Cross is foolishness to the world—and why we as Christians are called to proclaim Christ crucified.**
28. Because in the Cross, in Christ crucified, we see **the value in suffering, the true nature of love, and the very Heart of God Himself—a God Who’s compassion for our sufferings knows no limits—to the point that He suffers with us, and suffers for us.**
29. And in Christ crucified we see that **all our sins, all our pain, and all our ugliness, have now become things of profound beauty —** because the love revealed through the Crucifixion was **so pure, so powerful, so limitless that it transformed all the pain and ugliness that touched it—and** all the pain and ugliness that touches our lives even today.
30. And it’s not **that we should go searching for suffering—but** when unavoidable suffering comes our way, we need to FIND God and SEE God in the midst of it—**because the PRESENCE of suffering, does not mean the ABSENCE of God —** for as the Crucifixion shows us, God is very much with us in our suffering—as **His Heart continues to bleed for us even today, just as it bled for us on the Cross.**
31. For the world teaches us **to avoid suffering at all costs—but** our Faith tells to embrace unavoidable suffering—**AGAIN,** not in a morbid or twisted sense—but because embracing our sufferings **is an opportunity to participate in the power and beauty of sacrificial love—the highest form of love that there is—a love that the Angels envy us for—a love that will change our lives and our world for the better. AMEN.**