

The Gift of a Beloved Son

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Psaln 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19

Romans 8:31b-34

Mark 9:2-10

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

In his breathless relief over the sparing of his son, Abraham spies a ram and knows he has found a substitute to offer in place of his beloved boy. Isaac was a son, his firstborn whom he loved! Abraham's hopes and dreams were pinned on him. To lose Isaac would be to lose everything. But in his place Abraham offers something that isn't even his—the ram is a found object, provided by the merciful God. Isaac is commonly considered a type or foreshadowing of Jesus, but there is also great contrast between them. While Abraham substitutes an animal for his son, God offers his Son in place of us. An inferior creature substitutes for Isaac, but an infinitely superior creature substitutes for us. The ram shares nothing in common with Abraham, but Jesus is God's own Son who shares the very life of God. His divinity is manifested on the mountain in a spectacle that terrifies the disciples. This Jesus who is sacrificed in our place—who, unlike Isaac, God did not hold back—is the one of whom Paul sings. Like a teenager on the playground Paul struts and says: Who would dare be against us? Why so bold? Because Paul knows, as we all should, that one far greater than any threatening bully stands with us: Christ who died, was raised, and who forever reigns and intercedes for us, his sisters and brothers.

“He who did not spare his own Son . . . will he not also give us everything else along with him?” (Romans 8:32).



SHARING FAITH

- ◆ Jesus was deeply steeped in the history of his people, symbolized here by Moses and Elijah, who represent the law and prophets. What aspects of your history do you understand best? Who in your ancestry helps you understand yourself better?
- ◆ Have you ever undertaken something you didn't want to do because you thought God was asking it of you? How did you feel? Would you do it again?
- ◆ What do you think motivated Abraham's willingness to give up what he loved most in the world? What do you think motivated God's willingness to send his only beloved Son into the world?

LIVING THE LITURGY

- ◆ Make a sign to post in some corner of your home that reads, “Mount Tabor.” Try to reserve that area as a place to go when you need an experience of God's awesome, overwhelming presence.
- ◆ Cut out a picture of a ram or print one from the Internet. Glue it to a piece of cardboard and use it as a bookmark. The next time you go to confession or just feel “sinful,” take out the ram and remember that just as the ram substituted for Isaac, Christ substituted for you and paid the price for your sins.
- ◆ Brainstorm ideas for small things that each member of your family can do this week to show love for God and kindness to others. Make a list with at least one thing for each person each day. Check off your offerings as you complete them.