

Sunday's

READINGS

Exodus 24:3-8

Hebrews 9:11-15

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

Scan the code to read
today's readings. →



Opening PRAYER

Jesus, because of the depth of your love, you willingly made the sacrifice of your life for us. I want to live in the knowledge of your love. Amen.



Thoughts for REFLECTION

As you connect these readings by the thread of salvation history, recall other stories from Scripture that point to the relationship between love and sacrifice.

How do the words of your favorite love song mirror God's love?

Awaken is written and edited by Jo Ann Paradise, D.Min.



What You NEED to KNOW

Scripture Background

Exodus 24:3-8

Today, we witness one of the most defining moments in Jewish history. Moses having received the rules and moral responses for God's chosen, recites them to the gathered people. What follows is a blood ritual, a common practice in ancient cultures. Blood rituals were practiced in marriage ceremonies or other significant moments in community life. The sharing of blood between people symbolized a bond. The Israelites identified blood as a source of life. Since God is the source of all life, blood was seen as a sacred gift given by the Divine. The sacrifice that Moses performs is a slight adaptation of the common sacrifice offered to God for praise and atonement. Sprinkling the people with the blood of the sacrifice was a solemn, sacred binding to God and to the Covenant.

Hebrews 9:11-15

This letter is written by an unknown author and offers reflection on Jesus as the high priest. The Jewish priesthood consisted of men from the tribe of Levi. They were born into the priesthood. Jesus was not. Early Christians reflecting on Jesus' Death to develop a profound insight. Jesus on the Cross, which at first was an obstacle to their belief,

became a gateway to God's plan. Jesus was sacrificed for our sake. In offering us the most incredible sign of God's love, Jesus willingly accepted the consequence for living the covenant. In doing so, he restored the possibility that we may live eternally with God, as he desires for us. Jesus was also the priest who offered the sacrifice. He allowed the Romans to take his life. It is now through our relationship with Christ we can live in right relationship with God.

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

To make the connection between the Last Supper and the blood rituals of the Israelites, Mark tells us that the Last Supper is a Passover meal. Passover is the pivotal event in Jewish history that cements their identity as God's chosen. The final plague that pushed Pharaoh to release the Jews from slavery in Egypt was the death of the first-born son. Moses instructed the Jews to ritually sacrifice a lamb and to mark the doorway of their homes with its blood. That night marks the Jews deliverance from slavery by God. Jesus' actions at the Last Supper are part of the Passover tradition. Jesus helped the Apostles to understand the meaning of his Death, which saves us from sin, suffering, and death.





Points to Ponder

What Lies at the Heart of Sacrifice?

Would you agree that our culture is afraid of the word *sacrifice*? In this world, where we are formed to seek instant gratification, how do we even begin to introduce the concept? A young woman about to be married was speaking to her spiritual director. She said, “I have been thinking about my marriage. It occurred to me that I may be asked to make some sacrifices.” If you didn’t just roll your eyes, your life experience has taught you that love by its very nature is sacrificial. The Cambridge dictionary defines sacrifice as something “useful or important that you choose not to do or have in order to have something that is more important.” This can be for a relationship, ideal, or belief. The motivation behind a sacrifice is as important as the sacrifice itself. Examining our motivations for the sacrifices we choose is a sign of spiritual maturity.

- Why did Jesus choose to sacrifice his life?
- What are you willing to sacrifice for the Kingdom?



The Eucharist is the bread that gives strength.
—Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Strengthen belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Visit the Pflaum Eucharist resources page.



Connecting **GOSPEL**

and CHURCH TEACHING

Sacrifice and Communion

The words of Jesus from today’s Gospel “This is my body...This is my blood,” are used by many Christians in worship services. As Catholics, however, we hold a distinct understanding about these words of institution. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, when the words are said by a Catholic priest during the Consecration at Mass, they bring about a change to the bread and wine, which truly become the Body and Blood, soul and divinity in the celebration of the Eucharist, Christ is “present in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God

and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present” (CCC, 1374). In our subjective, limited human minds we cannot grasp the fullness of this mystery. It is a matter of faith. Yet, if you believe that Jesus could cure the sick, walk on water, and raise the dead, is it difficult to believe that he can change bread and wine into his Body and Blood? We confess that the power of Jesus’ love has no limits. Why then would he be limited by bread and wine?

➔ To learn more, refer to CCC, 1322–1337, and 1374 or go to Booklet 8, Session 1 in Growing Faith.



Closing PRAYER

Jesus, loving you is the reason for my being. Let your grace so fill me, that offering a sacrifice in your name brings me joy. Amen.

FAMILY CORNER

Scan here for parent resources. ➔



Question of the Week

What can you sacrifice for your family this week?



Family Prayer

Jesus, help us to be thankful for the sacrifices others make for us. Amen.