

A reflection for the second week of Lent

Relinquishment

For many, death makes life a cruel joke. Simone de Beauvoir said as much in *Force of Circumstance*, her bittersweet memoir of hopes, projects, and loves doomed to extinction. Bertrand Russell, in his own weighty autobiography, said that the entire sweep of human aspiration and accomplishment was little more than a dust heap before the deterioration of society.

What is the journey for? What is the upshot of this log trek through deserts and barrenness, a few oases notwithstanding? Why wait, unmoored and tossed about on the sea of history?

Each of us is required to make Abraham's sacrifice. We all must face the inevitability of letting go our most beloved person, task, accomplishment, joy. Everything dear to us, everything given to us by God is subject to death: its own and our own.

The essence of the story is this: Is God good? And will God keep his promises? Abraham is our father in faith because he embodies the final act of faith that all of us must make. We all face the sacrifice. We all stand before the terrible relinquishment of everything we hold most dear.

And our very God does the same. "This is my Son, the Beloved." God's "only begotten," one of our own kind, will go through our passages—even the passage of death.

God has made the promise not only to Abraham and to us. God has made the promise to God's very self.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul asks: Is it possible that God, who did not spare his only Son but handed him over for the sake of us all, will not grant us all things besides?