

Virtue of the Month

March

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Phil 4:8

Growing Together in Virtue!

This year at St. Peter School, preschoolers through 8th grade are "**Growing Together in Virtue!**" Each month throughout the school year every student in every grade is learning about a specific virtue and is being guided by teachers in the understanding and practice of the virtue. Instilling virtue isn't easy, and takes prayer, discipline, and encouragement, not only at school but even more importantly at home. We pray that through God's grace, we all grow closer to God as we work to cultivate virtue in the hearts of our children.

What are virtues? Virtues are firm habits to do what is right and good. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that “a virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best himself.” (CCC 1803). Virtues open us up to a good and meaningful life. They guide us to live morally, control our emotions and avoid what is sinful. In doing so, virtues help us become „fully human” and tap into the rich potential given to us by God. Virtues are connected to our conscience. The conscience is where we recognize the moral quality of each and every action. It is our most secret core - the place where we are alone with God, able to hear His voice. Virtues help us „form” our conscience so that we clearly hear what God is saying and competently carry out what is right, good, true and beautiful. As a parent, what do you think is the most important part of virtue training? Is it understanding the virtues and knowing what each means? Is it explaining each virtue to your children and then monitoring the development in their lives? Or, is it selecting one or two virtues to „showcase” in your own life? As is the case with any habit, developing a virtuous life is a lifelong process. It takes a great deal of time and energy to become skilled at choosing what is right. Be assured that virtuous competence is worth the effort it takes. Parents that commit to this long and exacting work will enjoy fulfilling relationships and find contentment in family life.

(from http://www.dioceseoflacrosse.com/ministry_resources/family_life/parentsplace/virtues.htm)

The virtue for the month of March is **Sacrifice**.



Sacrifice



Definition

A sacrifice - is a gift to God which tells Him we love Him

Sacrifice is - giving up something.

Sacrifice is - "love in action." When we love someone, we want to "do" for them.

Sacrifice is – denying one's self (a dying to self) for the sake of another.

Selfishness (the opposite of virtue; a vice) keeps us from making sacrifices for God. Selfishness means the desire to please ourselves more than to please God.

Learning how to sacrifice is what learning how to Love is all about.

Catechism of the Catholic Church Quotes

A gift is a sign of what is in the heart. A sacrifice is a gift to God which tells Him we love Him. A sacrifice is something we can see, but the important thing about it is something we cannot see; that is- what is in the heart.

New St. Joseph Baltimore Catechism

A sacrifice is offered through a priest who takes our place before God.

The Mass is a reminder of the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. There the Good Shepherd gave His life for His sheep. He did this to show the great love in His Heart. The Mass is a living reminder since it actually IS the same act of love. The Holy Eucharist is a sign of Christ. It IS Christ really present with us.

New St. Joseph Baltimore Catechism

Christ's whole life is an offering to the Father

The Son of God, who came down "from heaven, not to do [his] own will, but the will of him who sent [him]",⁴¹³ said on coming into the world, "Lo, I have come to do your will, O God." "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."⁴¹⁴ From the first moment of his Incarnation the Son embraces the Father's plan of divine salvation in his redemptive mission: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work."⁴¹⁵ The **sacrifice** of Jesus "for the sins of the whole world"⁴¹⁶ expresses his loving communion with the Father. "The Father loves me, because I lay down my life", said the Lord, "[for] I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father."⁴¹⁷

CCC #606

Scripture Quotes

Whoever does not take up his cross and follow Me, is not worthy of Me. ~Matthew 10:38

I will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord. Psalm 116:13

...For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. ~1Corinthians 5:7

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. ~Mark 8:34

Jesus said to him, If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me. ~Matthew 19:21

Other Quotes

If you see that you have not yet suffered tribulations, consider it certain that you have not begun to be a true servant of God; for the Apostle says plainly that all who choose to live piously in Christ, shall suffer persecutions. ~St. Augustine

If you do not learn to deny yourself, you can make no progress in perfection.
St. John of the Cross

Where there is no love, pour love in and you will draw love out.
St. John of the Cross

We always find that the ones who walked closest to Christ were those who had to bear the greatest trials. St Teresa of Avila

There is one and only one possible way to joy; selfless love.
Peter Kreft

Self-sacrifice is the real miracle out of which all the reported miracles grow.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Lord measures our perfection neither by the multitude nor the magnitude of our deeds, but by the manner in which we perform them.
St. John of the Cross

Live in the world as if only God and your soul were in it; then your heart will never be made captive by any earthly thing.
St. John of the Cross

"It is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich."
Henry Ward Beecher



Prayers of Sacrifice

Fatima Sacrifice Prayer

Oh my Jesus,
It is for love of Thee,
In reparation for the offenses committed
Against the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
And for the conversion of poor sinners.
Amen.

During the July 13, 1917 apparition, Our Lady taught this prayer to the children to be said when they have some sacrifice to offer God.

Prayer Before A Crucifix

Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus,
While I kneel before you. I ask you to give me faith, hope
and love, true sorrow for my sins, and the desire to please
you more and more. I look with great love and sorrow
at you five wounds. And I remember the words which

David your prophet said of you, my Jesus:

“They have pierced my hands and my feet;
they have counted all my bones.”





Virtue of Sacrifice

Stories & Poems & Activities

- St. Maximilian Kolbe's story of sacrifice
- Scripture Passages on Sacrifice
- Stories of Sacrifice

Abraham's Sacrifice

The Car Crash

Whoever Loses his Life will Preserve it

Rainbow Crow

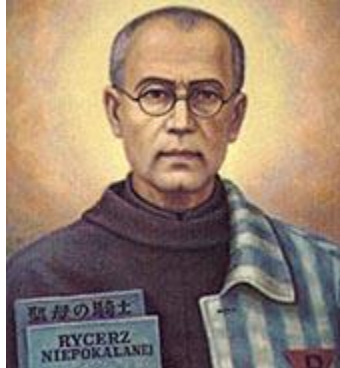
Poem of Sacrifice

The Treasure

- Activities for Families and Classrooms throughout Lent
- Offering Up Our Sacrifices

Saints and how they lived the Virtue of Sacrifice:

St. Maximilian Kolbe



August 14

Raymond Kolbe was born in Poland on January 8, 1894. In 1910, he entered the Conventual Franciscan Order. In 1912 Kolbe went to Rome, where he studied theology and philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University. In 1917 he founded the sodality (devotional association) of the Militia of Mary Immaculate, and was ordained a priest in 1918, taking the name Maximilian...

When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, he knew that his monastery would be seized, and sent most of the friars home. The Gestapo ransacked the City of Mary Immaculate and arrested Father Kolbe with about 40 other friars. They were sent to a holding camp in Germany, then to one in Poland...

On December 8, 1939, the Gestapo released Father Kolbe. He returned to the City of Mary Immaculate, where he and the other friars began to organize a shelter for three thousand Polish refugees, including two thousand Jews. The friars shared everything they had with the refugees. They housed, fed and clothed them, and brought all their machinery into use in their service...

On February 17, 1941, Father Maximilian was again arrested, this time on charges of aiding Jews and the Polish underground. Gestapo officers who were shown around the whole monastery were astonished at the small amount of food prepared for the brothers. Father Maximilian was sent to the infamous Pawiak prison in German Occupied Warsaw, and was singled out for special ill-treatment.

On May 28, 1941 the Nazis closed the City of Mary Immaculate and took Father Kolbe, with four of his companions, to Auschwitz, where he died.

Heroic Sacrifice

At Auschwitz, after a prisoner escaped, the Nazis chose ten men to be killed. When Franciszek Gajowniczek, protested that he had a wife and children, Father Kolbe stepped forward and

offered to replace Gajowniczek among those killed. Father Kolbe was thrown into a starvation bunker, where he taught the Catholic faith to the others in the bunker and prayed with them as they died one by one. After two weeks, Father Kolbe remained alive. Finally, on August 14, 1941 the Nazis injected phenol into his veins, killing him at last. Franciszek Gajowniczek survived and told the story of Father Kolbe's heroic sacrifice to everyone he could until his death in 1997.

The Church Honors Maximilian Kolbe for the greatest sacrifice of all - "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" John 15:13

St. Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us.

Scripture Passages on Sacrifice

For Entering into notebooks and Discussing



Understanding Sacrifice

How is sacrificing and suffering redemptive? _____

What is the “Salvifici Doloris” written by Pope John Paul II? an
_____ Letter.

John Paul II in this letter says “Every man has his own share in the Redemption. Each one is also called to share in that suffering...” What does this mean? And how do we do it? _____

What to Give Up?

What does God want us to “Give Up”? _____

The Help of God’s Grace

Where do we get the help we need to persevere in sacrificing and all virtue? _____

Scripture Passages on Sacrifice

For Entering into notebooks and Discussing



Understanding Sacrifice

The concept of self-sacrifice and [martyrs](#) are central to Christianity. As Catholics we know suffering (sacrificing) is redemptive when joining one's own sufferings to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Thus one can offer up involuntary suffering, such as illness, or purposefully embrace suffering in acts of penance, such as fasting. St. Paul tells us - "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Col 1:24). Pope John Paul II explained in his Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris* (11 February 1984):

"In the Cross of Christ not only is the Redemption accomplished through suffering, but also human suffering itself has been redeemed...Every man has his own share in the Redemption. Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished...In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ...The sufferings of Christ created the good of the world's redemption. This good in itself is inexhaustible and infinite. No man can add anything to it. But at the same time, in the mystery of the Church as his Body, Christ has in a sense opened his own redemptive suffering to all human suffering" (*Salvifici Doloris* 19; 24).

What to Give Up?

During Lent, we think about how Jesus gave up His life for sinners. We observe Lent by giving up our favorite things, to imitate Christ's example (His forty days in the desert). The most profound story about giving up is told in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."

God gave up His one and only Son. What did Jesus give up? He gave up His Life. Jesus could have been the most powerful king in the world, but He knew what His job was on earth. He gave up His life to take away our sins.

What should we give up? God tells us to give up sin. God wants us to think about all the good we can do instead of all the bad things we're tempted to do. When other children are calling some other child ugly names, what does God expect from us? God expects us to defend the other person and to show kindness (another virtue by the way). What happens when we're tempted to steal something when no one is looking? God expects us to give up our desire to steal and to be honest.

God wants us to say "I give up" every time we know that we are sinners. He wants us to give up and ask for His help, because we can't beat sin all by ourselves.

(taken from Object Lessons by Edward C. Grube)

The Help of God's Grace

Frequent the graces of the Church in this struggle: While we are all called to strive in virtue, we all fall. We need Sacramental Grace to strengthen our wills and to purify our souls. Encourage students to ask their parents to take them to Confession regularly, and also look to Confession as your own spiritual emergency room. Go as needed. Frequent Mass to heal venial sin.

It takes 3 weeks to break a bad habit and hold onto a new habit, or so the psychologists* tell us. We know the journey is for a lifetime.

We are all called to grow in holiness, and to join the saints someday. The path is laid out before us minute-to-minute. Learning how to sacrifice is what learning how to love is all about.

God's words are clear: never grow weary in well-doing (2 Thessalonians 3:13)...and he washed the feet of his disciples (John 13:1-17)...and he breathed his last (Mark 15:37). - All for us. Invigorate our love with the spirit of sacrifice!

*Taken from: [Helping children learn that Sacrifice = Love](#) « *Living the Liturgical Year from www.wordpress.com**

Activities for Families and Classrooms Throughout Lent

Sacrifice Beads

The sacrifices which are made during Lent and Advent should not be merely negative—giving things up. One might suggest to the children that they make secret offerings to Jesus which will be known only to Him and to them. Here is a way to motivate them.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus, when she was a child, made use of some "sacrifice beads." All that is needed is a string of about 10 beads, (a medal at one end is helpful) and something to move from one bead to the next, for example, a small rubber band. Every time the child does something for Jesus, she moves the marker to the next bead. Soon, like St. Therese, she will be "putting her hand into her pocket a hundred times a day to count her sacrifices." Eventually, the child will "graduate" to the stage of doing all for the love of Jesus, with or without beads.

Prayer Source: *How to Make Your House a Home* by Rev. Bernard Stokes, O.F.M., Family Life Bureau, Washington D.C., 1955

Lent Box

This year, have the kids put together a lent box. What you do is, find any box and have the kids put in their favorite toys, games, or whatever they'd like to sacrifice for lent. Then, put on the lid and label it "Good-bye for Lent- See You at Easter!" Find a place in a closet or on a high shelf where it's out of sight. Don't forget to bring it out for opening on Easter! :-)

Lenten Calendar

Here is a printed Lenten calendar for kids. It's a fun visual for kids so they can see the 40 days of lent of lent going by, and Easter approaching. There is room left in the squares to write in daily prayers or sacrifices if desired. The important days are brought to special attention with fun visuals for kids that symbolize what's going on that day, and little fish symbolize days to avoid meat (although children are not required to do this). It also shows kids that Sundays are not included in the 40 days of lent. Here are some dates you might want to add to your calendar:

- St. Patrick- March 17
- St. Joseph- March 19 (If you write in this day, the liturgical color is white.)
- Spring Begins (March 19 or 20)
- Annunciation of the Lord- March 25 (If you write in this day, the liturgical color is white.)
- St. John Baptist de la Salle –April 7

Crown of Thorns

Here you will find directions on how to make a salt dough crown of thorns with toothpicks. Every time your child makes a sacrifice, he or she removes a toothpick from the crown!



*Activities taken from Catholic Icing website

Good Deed Jar

Catch your students “doing good,” and add a bean, bead, or stone into a jar to show how their good works help store up a treasury. It’s an extra way to thank them when they’ve made a sacrifice. When the jar is full, enjoy a classroom treat and celebrate your classroom’s growth in holiness.

Offering Up Our Sacrifices

Have you ever heard someone use the phrase “offer it up” about a problem?

Offering up our troubles to God is a great way to remember that, in our faith, suffering is never wasted or meaningless when it’s united with Christ’s suffering on the Cross, for atonement for sins.

(taken from www.ourcatholicprayer.com)

“Offer It Up” Journal

Each day write down a sacrifice you were able to offer up to show your love for God and neighbor:

Day 1	_____
Day 2	_____
Day 3	_____
Day 4	_____
Day 5	_____
Day 6	_____
Day 7	_____
Day 8	_____
Day 9	_____
Day 10	_____
Day 11	_____
Day 12	_____
Day 13	_____
Day 14	_____
Day 15	_____

_____continue on back

Things to contemplate to prepare for the discipline to “**offer up**”:

- Am I patient with others weaknesses
- Do I take correction with a positive attitude
- Do I retaliate when offended
- Do I get up on time (don't hit the snooze button)
- Do I eat healthy
- Am I willing to do what others want rather than what I prefer
- Do I complement others efforts
- Am I encouraging when someone fails
- Do I always have to win or be right
- Am I attentive to others needs
- Do I join in on the latest gossip
- How much TV do I watch and what do I watch
- Do I help with chores (at school and home) voluntarily
- Do I pray daily –asking what can I do for you Lord
- Do I pray for others
- Do I go to confession prepared
- Am I generous with what I have
- Am I willing to share with everyone
- Do I play favorites
- Do I look for the good in everyone and every situation
- Remember the Works of Mercy:
 - Corporal Works of Mercy
 1. Feed the hungry
 2. Give drink to the thirsty
 3. Clothe the naked
 4. Shelter the homeless
 5. Visit the sick
 6. Visit those in prison
 7. Bury the dead
 - Spiritual Works of Mercy
 1. Admonish the sinner
 2. Instruct the ignorant
 3. Counsel the doubtful
 4. Comfort the sorrowful
 5. Bear wrongs patiently
 6. Forgive all injuries
 7. Pray for the living and the dead



Songs of Sacrifice
Grades 5-8
(Listen on YouTube)

The Sacrifice

Artist: Unknown

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhAMiZfUYsI>

Here I stand, accused but not guilty
and though my heart is pure, I'm treated so filthy
But I will carry on, through the insults and scolding
I will not try to fight this trial that's unfolding

Cause this love that I feel inside, is worth all the pain
and I'm willing to give my life, so that yours can be saved

Here I am, bruised but not broken
Though my flesh is torn, for the truth I have spoken
I still feel the sting of denial, my arms still extending
I can't help but cry, cause it's you I'm defending

Oh, this love that I feel inside, is worth all the pain
I will give up my life, so that you will be saved
This love that I feel inside, is worth all the pain
I will give you my life, so that you can be saved
I will give you my life, if you'll do the same.

'This Thorn' by Twila Paris

Thank you for this thorn embedded in my flesh
I can feel the mystery my spirit is made fresh
You are sovereign still and forever wise
I can see the miracle opening my eyes
To a proud heart so quick to judge
Laying down crosses and carrying grudges
The veil has been torn
And I thank you for this thorn

Thank you for this thorn fellowship of pain
Teaching me to know you more never to complain
Thank You for this love planted in my side
Faithful patient miracle opening my eyes

I never thought I'd say it without reservation
But I am truly grateful for this piercing revelation
Of a proud heart so quick to judge
Laying down crosses and carrying grudges
The veil has been torn
And I thank you for this thorn

And if You chose to take it, I will praise You
And thank You for the healing in your name
But if it must remain, I thank You for Your rod
Evidence of Father-love for a child of God
I join you in sorrow
So much less than You have borne
And I thank you
Really I thank You
Lord I thank You
I thank You for this thorn



Songs of Sacrifice
Grades k-4
(Listen on YouTube)

I Love You Lord

Words and music by Janelle Reinhart
From CatChat (www.catchat.ca) Volume #2 Jesus in My Heart

Verse 1

Lord, all I want is to do your will
Teach me how to listen and be still
Lord, help me to do all that is right
To live by faith and not by sight

Chorus:

And I will sing
Sha-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
And I will dance
Pa-ra-pa pa pa pa pa pa pa pa pa
And I will shout, OH!!!
Oh, oh, oh, I love you, Lord
I love you, Lord (2x)

Verse2

Lord, I want to always live the Truth
Let my life be a witness and a proof
That your Holy Spirit dwells in me
He is making me stand firm,
And live free
(chorus)

Other Cat Chat Songs (www.catchat.ca) that would be appropriate for Sacrifice:

Lamb of God from Volume #6

Hey! From Volume #6

I Wanna Say Yes from Volume #1

The Greatest Gift of All from Volume #4

Jesus Fill My Heart, Volume #1

I am Called (Any Virtue) Volume # 3 - a great song to help students embrace their calling to be saints and live lives of virtue!

*Also, the Feast of St. Joseph is March 19th, and so you might like to share with students the songs, ***Saint Joseph*** and ***Saint Triumphant*** from Volume #3 which sing of St. Joseph and the saints intercession for us.

Rainbow Crow

By Nancy Van Laan (taken from a Child's Book of Virtues by Kay McSpadden)

The first time snow came to the earth the animals were pleased. But when the snow did not stop the animals began to suffer from the cold.

“We must send a message to The Creator Who Creates By Thinking What Will Be,” said Wise Owl. We must ask him to think the world warm again.”

The Animals began to debate who among them should travel to The Creator. Wise Owl couldn't see well in daylight. Coyote was a trickster and could not be trusted.

Turtle offered but he was too slow. Finally Rainbow Crow volunteered. He was the most beautiful bird in the land, with red, green and blue feathers and a lovely singing voice.

For three days and three nights Rainbow Crow flew, passing the moon, the sun and the stars. At last he came to The Creator. He began to sing a beautiful song to get The Creator's attention.

“Come here, Rainbow Crow,” The Creator said. “Let me reward you for your beautiful song. What can I do for you?”

Rainbow Crow asked The Creator to take away the snow.

“I can't un-think snow,” The Creator said, “but I can give you something to keep the animals warm.”

With that The Creator took a large stick, stuck it into the sun until it burst into flame, and handed the burning stick to Rainbow Crow.

Rainbow Crow flew back to earth as fast as he could. As he flew past the stars and the sun, soot from the fire turned his feathers black. AS he passed the moon, the smoke from the fire caught in his throat, changing his beautiful singing voice into a hoarse caw.

The animals were delighted with the fire that Rainbow Crow brought. Once again they were warm and safe. However, Rainbow Crow was quite upset about what had happened to him.

“Don't be sad,” The Creator said. “Your sacrifice has made the lives of many much better. And as for you, when people come to the earth you will not be hunted because your flesh tastes of smoke. No one will want your black feathers, nor will people put you in a cage to sing for them. You will always be a free bird.”

Then The Creator said, “When you look at your feathers in the sunlight you will see the rainbow and remember your sacrifice.”

And Rainbow Crow's heart was glad.

SACRIFICE . . .

a poem by Allison Chambers Coxsey

The sacrifice of love we give,
Takes less and yet gives more;
An everlasting hand of love,
The heart an open door.

The willingness to give of self,
To lay down your own life;
To touch another person's heart,
In loving sacrifice.

A chance that God has given you,
To reach another soul;
Forever changed by kindness,
A life your love made whole.

For life is but a circle,
Each life part of the chain;
Each link is joined by sacrifice,
That causes man to change.

To turn and reach a hand of love,
To touch another's life;
Will cause the circle to be whole,
In loving sacrifice.

You may want to read this story aloud to your students and then ask them to reflect on the question below.

Sacrifice

There is a story told of a young boy whose older brother was in a car crash. The father approached the younger son shortly after the crash and said, "Son, if you will, your older brother needs a blood transfusion in order to live. The doctors have determined that only you can provide this blood. Will you provide blood for your brother so that he may live?" The younger son did not hesitate in answering he would indeed help his older brother. Unknown to the little boy was the relative simplicity and safety of the procedure. The car ride to the hospital was unusually quiet for this normally very talkative little boy. The father, at the same time in the most awkward and difficult position of his entire life, thought best to leave the young boy to his own thoughts. The father and young boy entered the now familiar doors of the town hospital. As the father and son sat in the hospital room, the nurse entered with the needle in hand. She commented how courageous the young boy was, prepared the boy's right arm as she had done to hundreds of other patients over the years, and slowly inserted the needle into his arm; the vial began to quickly fill with the young boy's blood. After the vial filled, the young boy, with tears in his eyes, turned to his father and asked, "Daddy, how long do I now have before I die?"

"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

John 15:13



This boy was willing to give his life for his brother - no questions asked. How willing are you to make even small sacrifices for the good of others?

“Whoever Loses his Life will Preserve it”

(taken from The Many Faces of Virtue by Donald DeMarco)

The story is told of a Chinese hero who acted with remarkable unselfishness during an earthquake. From the vantage of his hilltop farm, he noticed the ocean swiftly withdraw, like some monstrous animal crouching before a leap. He knew that the leap soon to take place would be a tidal wave. At the same time, he realized that his neighbors, working in the low fields, were in danger of being swept away by the ocean's fury. Without a second thought, he immediately set fire to his own rice ricks and furiously rang the temple bell.

The hero's unselfish act prompted his neighbors to act with similar unselfishness in coming to what they believed to be his aid. The paradox here is that, by acting unselfishly, the neighbors saved their own lives. This paradox is consistent with the Gospel instruction that “whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it.” (Luke 17:33)

*Selfishness keeps us from making sacrifices for God. Selfishness means the desire to please ourselves more than to please God. Learning how to sacrifice is what learning how to Love is all about. **How can I try to be less selfish and love more by doing something for someone else that is very hard to do?***