

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

03/04/12 2 B

-- This past week, when Meryl Streep won the Oscar for Best Actress, we were reminded that her last Oscar came 30 years ago, despite her many nominations.

-- That Oscar came for her role as a mother and Holocaust survivor in the movie *Sophie's Choice*. The movie is set in New York a few years after WWII's end, but she has flashbacks to her time in the concentration camps.

-- She came there with two young children. At a critical time, the Nazis were shipping a number of camp survivors to another work camp. But they could only take a limited number. The rest would go to the gas chambers, and the prisoners knew that.

-- Luckily, she was lined up to be let on the train, with her two children in hand. But the guard barked at her, telling her she could take only one. If she didn't make a choice both would be left behind to die. Anguished, she let go of the younger child.

-- As we hear the story of Abraham and Isaac, that story comes to mind. Now, the perpetrators of this dilemma for Sophie were Nazis with evil intentions. But in Abraham's case, it is God's voice. What do we make of that? Would God actually ask that from him?

-- In our time and culture, it would be a ridiculous question. But in Abraham's time and culture, human sacrifice was not uncommon. It would not have been a ridiculous question, as difficult as it might be for Abraham to let go of his only son.

-- Of course, Abraham did not sacrifice Isaac. God did not want human sacrifice in that literal sense. But Abraham did have to sacrifice something. He had to sacrifice the security of knowing his son's family would be great. He had to sacrifice his trust in the things of this world.

-- Sacrifice is not a popular notion today. We want to have it all. After 9/11, we were told to go on living as before, buying and selling. The sacrifice seemed to be limited to those who went to Iraq and Afghanistan and their families.

-- But sacrifice is part and parcel of life. Parents have to let go as children grow older. They have to allow them to make their own decisions, even when they think they can make better ones (and may well be able to do that).

-- Jesus made the supreme sacrifice for us. He went to the cross and suffered the cruelest death. He did this because he was faithful to his mission on earth. He was the Messiah, but not a conquering war hero.

-- God the Father is not a monster who asked for his blood to calm his anger against the sinful human race. Rather, he desired that his Son be faithful in proclaiming His message, even when human authorities would resist it to the point of putting him to death.

-- Because of that, he is the beloved Son. And, like Peter, James and John, we should listen to him. We must allow time for God's Word to penetrate our minds and hearts.

-- And as that happens, we open ourselves to God's graces. That grace may well move us to voluntary sacrifice of things we have clung to that are not so important.

-- But it will open us up to what is truly important—God's everlasting life!