



CONNECT IN
PRAYER

Sacrifice and compassion

June 2024

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SACRIFICE AND COMPASSION



Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing... But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit."

1 Peter 3:8-9, 14-18

How precious is Jesus the Messiah, the Suffering Servant who - by presenting Himself as the perfect Lamb of God sacrificed once and for all to redeem humanity - expressed and demonstrated the depth of the Father's love and compassion!

Sacrifice and Compassion are values that we wish to cultivate, nurture, and strengthen within our PMI community. That is why through this edition of our Salat, we share with you testimonies of workers who embody these values within the communities where they live, in obedience and following in the footsteps of Christ.



Our cross-cultural workers' calling is not exempt from suffering and pain, just as the life and vocation of our Lord Jesus Christ was not. Being disciples of Christ Jesus and seeking to follow in His footsteps will always involve sacrifice--denying oneself, taking up the cross, and then following Him.

In addition to identifying with our Lord, the willingness to sacrifice brings us closer to the reality of the suffering faced by the persecuted church in some of the nations in which we serve. Blessed are those who for Christ's sake are afflicted and persecuted and can rejoice and be glad, because theirs is the Kingdom of heaven!

Our God is compassionate; He demonstrated His love for us by sending His Son to dwell among us and fulfill all that is necessary for our redemption.

In His compassion, when He came to live among us, He expressed deep sorrow, was silent, and did not open His mouth, while giving his life to pay the ransom for those who were "as sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34).

The Holy Spirit of God intercedes today for His own, and helps them in weakness. For this reason, we emphasize the value of compassion, which pushes us to cry out for those who have not yet recognized the Messiah Jesus.

We seek to embody His love among them, bearing witness with our lives and words that He continues today to seek the lost, to extend compassion, and to rejoice when -by faith- they are eternally reconciled with Him.

We invite you then, dear brothers and sisters, to enjoy the stories of this Salat, and to join us in prayer so that many families of the earth may set their eyes on Jesus, Author and Finisher of the faith, who "for the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2)

May the reflection on the person of Christ and the consideration of His sacrifice and compassion encourage us when we believe that we are going to faint and inspire us to run with patience the race that lies ahead, with our eyes on Jesus!

To His name be all glory!

"After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied..." Isaiah 53:11

M.C.W.
Fields Director PMI

Christ

THE PASSOVER LAMB

Several months after arriving to Central Asia, our language teacher invited us to celebrate the "Qorban Hayit" (the feast of sacrifice). He explained that they did so "remembering Prophet Ibrahim." In addition to sharing a meal together, we also witnessed how they publicly slaughtered a poor black sheep. We recall vividly the sharp knife, the moaning of the sheep, and the blood pouring out. Perhaps an image very close to the Old Testament, but somewhat violent for us as Costa Ricans. I remember thinking, "how close and at the same time how far you can be from the real sacrifice!"

The Forgotten Rescue

The word "ransom" is mentioned only once in the Qur'an, in Sura 37:107 "We rescued him by a splendid sacrifice." The idea of "sacrifice and rescue" is united in an "almost biblical" way. However, this idea has been lost in Islam. Amid the thousands of lambs that appeared in the streets and bazaars, all seemingly expressing in their eyes, "save me", the "rescue that allowed the splendid sacrifice" has been forgotten in Islam. Some might mention part of the story: Ibrahim's obedience (submission) and Allah's reward, in providing a ram. Yet, the rescue of the boy's life, by God's provision of an innocent being, is not part of the celebration: That lamb does not rescue!



A Lamb who saves us and inspires us

“No one can live that life that Jesus taught about in the Sermon on the Mount; Islam doesn't ask that of us,” a colleague at the university told me. “It is true, I said; without Jesus living within us, it would be impossible”: the risen Christ lives his life in us” Gal 2:20. There is no other way to live our faith. God made it possible with a sacrifice (Our Passover Lamb has already been sacrificed! 1 Cor 5:7). We, just as Isaac, are faced with a death sentence, and He rescued us with His sacrifice. It is that Easter Lamb, resurrected, who enables us to overcome sin, every day.

This is not only the message of Good News, but also the example to follow (Jn 13:15). Although it is impossible to match the sacrifice of Jesus, in PMI we are called to sacrificial service. We do not cling to the rights of safety, stability, or normalcy (What is stability, some will say!). We accept remoteness, loneliness, and even suffering, as a privilege of service (Philippians 1:29). When we were unable to attend the funeral of a departed loved one, we considered it a privilege. When we were deported from our country of service: also a privilege. When we watched our children cry: a privilege. We did not consider ourselves worthy of this calling!

It is because of what Jesus did for us, that we serve with compassion. Without the Passover Lamb, we would be just as lost as they are. That compassion leads us to love through action: sharing what we have, even when we lack; welcoming them, even if we are tired, and serving them, even if there is little response-- through Christ and for Christ! We are privileged to follow his example! Phil 2:5.

Let us pray together:

- For opportunities to speak of the sacrifice and ransom paid entirely by Jesus Christ the Messiah
- That many would understand that sacrifice without ransom is insufficient
- That we as followers of Christ would live a life which imitates His sacrifice and compassion in service

G. F.

Worker in Central Asia and Costa Rica



SACRIFICE AND OBEDIENCE



In our local church here in the Middle East, we are doing a small group study on the book "Experiencing God" by Henry Blackaby. One of the key points in this book is that following God requires adjustments in our lives.

We cannot continue to live in our own way if we hope to know God more deeply. Furthermore, the book challenges us to obey by faith what He asks of us, so that we might experience seeing God at work through our lives.

A very big adjustment I had to make in my life was to leave what was safe and known - my job, family, and community - to enter the complete unknown. I think this big "adjustment" is something we share within our PMI community. It is a sacrifice for all of us to obey God's call to serve cross-culturally. Part of this sacrifice is setting aside our cultural way of thinking to learn to live in other cultures.

In all the countries where I have served, the Feast of the Sacrifice is celebrated. This celebration commemorates Abraham's sacrifice, when he went up on the mountain and there God provided a lamb. In each culture, I have observed this feast celebrated in a slightly different way. In one nation where I lived, the lamb was sacrificed in the courtyard of the family patriarch's home, and the meat was prepared for the whole extended family.

I had the experience of sitting next to the women cutting the meat of the lamb into pieces; the meat was still warm, as it had been alive a short time ago. In another country, I lived in a big city.

There, the neighborhood butcher made all the sacrifices in front of his store, starting very early in the morning so that he could finish all of them. The asphalt of the street was covered with blood that day.

While traditions vary, the meaning of this feast is the same - remember Abraham's obedience. God still asks for our obedience, but not as a requirement to earn a reward. As Blackaby says, "Obedience is the outward expression of my love for God." Whether it is the renouncing of my comfort, or the effort to adapt to another culture, or another action that God asks of us, it is out of love for Him and others that we do it.

The blood spilled in the yard or on the street shocked me. It wasn't pleasant. Yet beyond that, it reminds me of the value of sacrifice, both the sacrifice we make of obeying God, and the sacrifice of our Lamb Jesus. Praise God for His great sacrifice which opens the way to Him, without the need to shed more blood! May that sacrifice motivate us to love expressed in obedience.

Let us pray together:

- For our friends and acquaintances who still put their faith in the sacrifice of an animal, may they know the Lamb of God who cleanses us from all sin.
- For our PMI community, may we obey motivated by love. May God give strength and encouragement to workers who are sacrificing comfort, relationships, and more out of obedience to God.

*H. L.
Worker in Middle East*

A SACRIFICE OF LOVE



Leaving our "comfort zone" is not at all easy; leaving our country of origin, our families that we love so much, our friendships of years; even things that for many are trivial and normal such as buying something in the supermarket that you like to cook at home, or simply sleeping and spending a night enjoying the silence and freshness of the south of our Latin America.

Many friends and dear ones tell us about the "great sacrifice" we have made in our lives by denying ourselves to answer God's call and be a "Sign of His Kingdom"; but in reality when we look to the cross and see the greatest sacrifice made by our Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God; we realize that it is ours only to try to be obedient to the biblical command to go and make disciples to the ends of the earth. When we experience in small details the love and care of the Father in the midst of those we serve, we find ourselves saying: "Any effort or sacrifice is worth it!"

That was our expression when we saw the joy of Saliou, a young student at the school we lead in a village in West Africa, in a country where more than 95% of its population are followers of Islam.

One day on the return from a time of leave in our beloved Chile, we arrived with suitcases not only full of memories, emotions, and beautiful times lived together with our loved ones; but also with gifts and items to bless the children. Some of those gifts were cases with beautiful pencils and school supplies for our new students. When we gave one to Saliou, he could not believe what he had in his little hands. He observed with such joy and innocence his first colored pencils, something so simple for many children, but something for him, given the living conditions of his family and environment, he had never had access to.

The next day when we saw Saliou arrive, he had on his little shoulders something that we will never forget. The pencil case that we received with so much love and gave to the children, had been transformed by Saliou! Putting it in a plastic bag, probably with the help of his mother, he tied it with some cloth strips, thus creating his first backpack.

I will never forget that day; it remains in our memories. Even more so with Saliou being from a family without any resources, with his mother and most of his family being illiterate. He became one of our most outstanding students, the one who advanced the fastest in the literacy process, tremendously intelligent, and capable. Above all, we had the privilege of dignifying his life with small details like that gift, and sharing with him the Love of Jesus in tangible ways; understanding that the small sacrifice of leaving everything is worth it to love those whom God already loved before us.

Let us pray together:

- For Saliou and for so many children who, like him, need to be reached by the love of Jesus.
- For generosity to bless so many children
- That whole families may be transformed and desire to be disciples of Jesus, who loved them and gave Himself for them
- For more workers for the harvest, who understand that they must sacrifice many things to follow Jesus, but that the reward is worth it

C. R.

Worker in North Africa





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