

Family Formation

Session 11: Sacrifice

Handout: "Sacrifice Beads"

Background for Parents

St. Therese, a Doctor of the Church, has shown the world how to do little things in a grand way. All day long she did little things to show Jesus how much she loved Him. Therese knew that even the smallest thing in the world, if done for the love of God, is beautiful in God's eyes. She has taught the whole Church that in all our actions, it's the intent of our heart that matters the most. Therese offered prayers and sacrifices to Jesus constantly.

So often we are afraid to suffer. We are afraid of the cross. But Jesus tells us, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14: 6). Jesus suffered much throughout His life, and if we are to follow in His footsteps, we will also run into sorrow and pain. The difference is that with Jesus, pain can be transformed into peace and joy. Jesus suffered for a purpose—to open up the gates of Heaven for us. If we stay by Jesus' side, we, too, will be able to turn pain and suffering into joy for ourselves and others.

With the family

Discuss sacrifice. Can there be anything good about sacrifices and people "offering things up" for another?

Briefly talk about St. Therese and her Little Way.

-*Who she was:* At 15, Therese Martin entered a Carmelite monastery and remained there praying and sacrificing for souls until she died of tuberculosis at the age of 24. Therese especially enjoyed praying for priests and for lost souls. While she was alive, very few knew how holy she was. This is because she followed "the Little Way." Some of the sisters in the cloister wondered what good thing they could mention about St. Therese at her funeral Mass because they thought she had not done anything worthy of note in her life!

-What "The Little Way" is: Therese did not feel that she could do big, grand things for the Lord, but she knew that she could offer up little things for Him all day long. Even something little like picking up a piece of string off the floor, Therese knew that if she did it for the love of God, it was beautiful in God's eyes. She has taught us that in all our actions, it is the intent of our heart that matters the most.

-St. Therese offered up everything for graces for others.

-St. Therese also teaches us about humility—we don't get any thanks or recognition from others because the acts are so small and so hidden but our heavenly Father, who sees all things, will repay us.

-St. Therese experienced transferences. She said she didn't mind being in a dark tunnel because she knew someone somewhere was getting light.

-Read Mt 6:1-7. Emphasize that our heavenly Father sees all things.

As a child, St. Therese used "sacrifice beads," which were a small string of beads to help her count the "presents" she offered to God. Each time she would make a sacrifice such as letting someone else have their way, St. Therese would secretly reach into her pocket and "pull a bead" to Jesus on the Crucifix. Like St. Therese, these sacrifice beads in our pocket can help us to become more aware of offering "presents" to God all day long. Make St. Therese's sacrifice beads for the children to count their "presents" or sacrifices for God as St. Therese did. See "Sacrifice Beads" handout.

Say a prayer to St. Therese and ask for her help and intercession as you embark upon this little way of doing little things for God because you love Him.

Throughout the week

Encourage your family to put their sacrifice beads in their pockets each day, so they can “pull a bead” secretly whenever they make a little sacrifice, offering, or prayer to the Lord. When saying good night to each child, it will be helpful to share with them how you are doing with your sacrifice beads and encourage them to share some of their “presents” with you.

Periodically review the need to journal. Modify your schedules if necessary to enable all family members quiet time with the Lord and time to journal.