



A very powerful form of intercessory prayer is to offer sacrifices for particular people or particular intentions. By offering sacrifices, you pray not only with your spirit but also with your body. So, if you or your family has a special intention—for instance, your next door neighbor who has just been diagnosed with cancer, or a teenager who has been seriously

injured in a car accident—you can make your prayer for them through sacrifices, such as giving up desserts for three days, not watching television or using electronic devices, or staying home to help with housework instead of going to the mall. These forms of “self-denial” are sacrifices, and these sacrifices are prayers that, united with Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself on the Cross, can win many graces for others, including healing, strength, and comfort.

Through our sacrifices, we can also help to make reparation for our own sins and the sins of others. “Making reparation” means repairing the damage caused by sin, or making up, through loving deeds such as prayer and sacrifice, for the offense given to God. This is analogous to the way a man who somehow offends his wife in the morning will bring flowers to her in the evening to make “reparation” for the offense. The most perfect act of reparation was Jesus’ suffering and death. This is why going to Mass is so important. When we make reparation, we unite our prayers and sacrifices to Jesus’ perfect sacrifice of Himself on the Cross.

In addition to choosing sacrifices of our own to make, we can also choose to offer as sacrifices other sufferings that come our way. These sacrifices may be an even better form of prayer, precisely because we don’t choose for these difficult or sad things to happen to us, but

they do happen to us, such as when another person mistreats us or when the weather causes the cancellation of a game we were happily anticipating. These sufferings are a part of life, but instead of turning in on ourselves with sadness, we can turn toward serving the needs of others by making that unpleasant thing a prayer in the form of a sacrifice. This means that we offer an unpleasant or disappointing occurrence together with Christ to the Father for the salvation of souls, or to make reparation for our own sins or the sins of others.

Children readily accept this practice of offering sufferings as sacrifices. Once it is explained to them, it becomes a wonderful way of transforming disappointing things into opportunities for good. For instance, your son may have fallen or been pushed by another child, resulting in a scraped knee. Hopefully, the child informed the adult supervising at the time; however, he may still be upset. By helping your child to think about Jesus when He was pushed by the soldiers as He was carrying His Cross, and how He fell and bruised His knees, you make it clear that the child can be united to Jesus in this small way. Instead of choosing to hate those who were mistreating Him, Jesus chose to forgive them and to love them. Your child can do the same. Your child can offer his

pain, both physical and spiritual, as a sacrifice for the person who hurt him or for another special intention (such as for a sick sibling or for a woman in the parish who has just lost her husband, etc.) By offering sacrifices, we learn to look beyond our own suffering to the suffering of Christ and others. United with Christ, we offer our suffering as a gift, a prayer, a sacrifice, that will help others in their needs and difficulties.

