

About ten years ago a young couple from Kentucky crossed the river to Cincinnati where they consulted an obstetrics practice about the child they were expecting. They were told the fetus did not have a genetic disorder. It did. The boy is now 8 years old and cannot speak or crawl. The parents now say that if the genetic screening had been correct, they would have aborted the child. Last week the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that the parents could sue the clinic – but only for the costs associated with the pregnancy and birth. The court said the parents could not sue for the cost of raising a child because that was not a possibility – the parents would have aborted the fetus. The media are calling this a wrongful birth lawsuit.

Now, I have never raised a child, so I have no idea what these parents are going through. But this story turns my stomach, and it deepens my respect for all parents, especially those who love and care for children with disabilities. In the Catholic Church we believe that all human life is sacred. We smile at birth and we cry at death. We believe that God has something wonderful in store for all of us, no matter how we are made.

The refrain we sing to our psalm today voices this confidence: “I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living.” No matter what adversity we experience, no matter what affliction we suffer, we will walk one day in the presence of God, in the land of the living.

We sing this psalm early in Lent on the Sunday we hear about the sacrifice of Isaac. Isaac was an only son. In obedience to his father he carried wood on his shoulder and went up a mountain, where he was to become a sacrifice. Sound familiar? Isaac foreshadows Jesus. Jesus was an only son. In obedience to his father he carried the wood of a cross and went up Calvary, where he was to become a sacrifice. Isaac was rescued from death, but Jesus was rescued through death. Either one of them could have sung this psalm: “O Lord, I am your servant. You have loosed my bonds. I will walk in the land of the living.”

God understands how costly death is, especially the death of one who was faithful to God. That is why God offers more, more than this life.

Our experience of Lent is like an experience of death. We end some things. We also pray a little more, and we help out where we have neglected to do so. Lent takes something out of us. In fact, if you’ve been faithful to your Lenten sacrifice, you may find yourself getting a little irritable by now. You’re not living the way you were accustomed to before Lent began. So you may be taking it out on someone else. But these weaknesses have to come out if we are to face them and seek God’s help to overcome them. We die to our sins.

During Lent we sacrifice. We accept a little death, because we know it promises an Easter of life. If we live as God’s faithful ones, faithful to all that is entrusted to our care, we will walk before the Lord with Isaac, with the risen Jesus, in the land of the living.