

**Sr. Rita Tofflemire just arrived back in Cameron from Tanzania for a visit. You may remember she put us in touch with Fr. Melchior Kambona, who came here last fall. We were raising money for him, and Sr. Rita tells me that the grinding mill has been purchased and will be installed this summer. I'd also like to thank all of you who are making pledges to the Vision of Faith campaign to improve our church building. We're hoping to raise \$700,000. Our first 35 pledges have already topped \$130,000, so we are on our way. People love this parish, and they are making a sacrifice.**

**Jesus talks about sacrifice in today's gospel. He is having a meal with some of the lowlife around town. The Pharisees who thought they were superior to everyone else shake their heads in disgust. But Jesus quotes a line from the Old Testament: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." In other words, you may go through the ritual of sacrifice every day, like Pharisees, but God desires a spirit of mercy, which even some lowlives have.**

**The line Jesus quotes comes from Hosea, and it appears in the first reading. Hosea addressed ordinary people whose country was at war; they were surrounded by armies and living with inadequate infrastructures of roads, food and water. So they say a prayer and God makes a response – but a response that is not altogether reassuring. The people praise God for being as faithful as the dawn and as rewarding as a good rain. But God responds, "Your piety evaporates like the morning dew." They probably wondered why, if they said their prayers and performed their religious duties, things weren't going any better. Well, their piety lasted only a short while. They put no heart into their actions. God says the line that Jesus quotes in the gospel, "It is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than holocausts." Don't just go through the motions, God tells them. Mean what you say and you'll see some results.**

**The same applies to us when we pray. If we mean what we say, we'll get some results. It also applies to relationships. If we commit to someone, it should show. We don't just say the words, "I love you." We have to show we mean it. Even at work, if we don't put some effort in, we won't have that job very long. It's not enough to go through the motions. We need to give heart to our commitments. The effort needs emotion.**

**If the effort has no emotion, some people give up the effort. They notice they're only going through the routine with God or with someone else. Rather than sharpen the relationship, many people give up on the routine. If you give up the routine you will lose the relationship. But if you keep up the effort, it can help you get the emotion back.**

**Jesus cautions everyone who practices religion. We may be tempted to rely on its forms to carry us through, as some Pharisees did. But God desires mercy, not sacrifice. God wants loyalty and intimacy and not just the routine. Routine prayer is an important part of our daily lives. Sunday mass is the single most important thing we Catholics do. But God is most pleased when we do it with meaning, and show it by how we live.**