

A story has it that Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, once captured a prince and his family. When they were brought before him, Cyrus asked the captured prince, "What will you give me if I release you?" "The half of my wealth," was his reply. "And if I release your children?" "Everything I possess." "And if I release your wife?" "Your Majesty, I will give myself." Cyrus was so moved by his devotion that he freed them all. As they returned home, the prince said to his wife, "Wasn't Cyrus a handsome man!" With a look of deep love for her husband, she said to him, "I didn't notice. I could only keep my eyes on you—the one who was willing to give himself for me."

Lent is the time for us to remember Jesus, the one who was willing to give his life for us and the manner in which he did, in fact, give his life for us. The willingness to give, even of one's very life, is not possible without love. This is the essence of today's gospel –

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,  
so that everyone who believes in him may not perish  
but may have eternal life. (John 3.16)*

Jesus not only gave himself for us on the cross, but in all the activities of his earthly life Jesus was continually giving of himself. And Jesus continues to give of himself in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist.

Grace is poured upon grace, for it is in the very nature of God to give. As Paul reminds us: For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing: it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2.8)

Everything comes from God. All that we have and possess has its origins in the bountiful love of God. We have all been gifted in many, many ways: gifted naturally and gifted supernaturally through baptism. The question now becomes: how do we use and share our gifts? Only faith and the motivation of love can answer that question.

***Peace and blessings,  
Gerard***