

The spectacle of people offering a sacrifice to a fishing-net may seem a far-fetched one. But the sacrifices actually made by people for the money they need to sustain their standard of living is precisely that. The priority which the making of money and the keeping of our job takes over all other considerations is clear evidence that we find the making of wealth the prime content of our life. You may think that this priority is imposed on you by others; if you don't put work first you'll lose your job, and that you can't afford to risk; so you accept it from others. Not that it would be so if it were left to you.

But in fact we must take responsibility for the facts of our life. If we took it our heads to put some other value at the top of the list - family life, for instance, or religious life - then we could choose to make it so. A good example is the erosion of days like Good Friday as holydays; little by little it has been accepted that Good Friday is a day of business like any other. Even our schools are being constrained to ignore Easter as a prime time for holy-day treatment.

Again and again we find people sacrificing their husbands, wives and children in the name of work. Human sacrifices? Yes, if it means the death of sympathy and support, the death of relationship, the death of marriage and of family. The symbolic language so often follows through; instead of a sympathetic sharing of hearts, that takes time and simplicity and patience, people start throwing the only gift they have to offer at each other: money. Surprisingly, if this results in children growing up with a twisted idea of what constitutes love and friendship, the hard-worked parent responds with bitterness: *I gave him everything, I worked all hours to provide for him; and how does he repay me?*

In the Gospel the pitiful picture of a child who cannot be healed despite all the good will and sympathy we can offer reminds us that we always need God to do good for one another. *Bring him to me* is the best advice we can receive from the Lord. The highest path is always the one suggested in prayer. If we want to establish good priorities we should put the first things first. That means our relationship with God.

Let us pray for this Mass to become a fountain of life and justice for the people of our parish. Let it become a place where our prime attention is devoted to God every day, so that our work and struggle to be good for one another has a chance of escaping from the selfish bonds which prevail in the world, and prevent us from giving true life to each other.