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"The pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many."

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The Dunadin

A Monthly Reflection on Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*

Well, it's Lent, so it seems a little meditation on sacrifice would be very appropriate. The following is from *The J.R.R. Tolkien Handbook* by Colin Duriez.

"One supreme example of sacrifice in the story of *The Lord of the Rings* is that of Gandalf on the dreadful Bridge of Khazad-Dum, fighting a Balrog."¹ Tolkien himself writes about Gandalf:

For in his condition it was for him a *sacrifice* to perish on the Bridge in defence of his companions, less perhaps than for a mortal Man or Hobbit, since he had a far greater inner power than they; but also more, since it was a humbling and abnegation of himself in conformity to 'the rules': for all he could know at that moment he was the *only* person who could direct the resistance to Sauron effectively, and all *his* mission was in vain. He was handing over to the Authority that ordained the Rules, and giving up personal hope of success.²

Brothers and sisters, with the help of God's grace, like the Son and in the Holy Spirit, may we truly hand our lives over to our Father.

Beware: what follows may give away the ending of the Trilogy.

Here is another quote from *The J.R.R. Tolkien Handbook*:

In *The Lord of the Rings* we learn of the sacrifice of Frodo and Sam in their quest to destroy the Ring. The burden of the sacrifice falls mostly on Frodo, revealed in his words to Sam as he prepares to leave Middle Earth:

"But," said Sam, and tears started in his eyes, "I thought that you were going to enjoy the Shire, too, for years and years, after all you have done."

'So I thought too, once. But I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them . . ."³

¹ Colin Duriez, *The J.R.R. Tolkien Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004) 226.

² J.R.R. Tolkien, *Letters*, Letter 156. Cited in Colin Duriez, *The J.R.R. Tolkien Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), page 227.

³ Colin Duriez, *The J.R.R. Tolkien Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004) 226.