

LENT SUNDAY IV "C"
MARCH 30/31, 2019

There are many avenues of interpretation and meditation one can travel in regard to the centerpiece of today's Scriptures, the Parable of the Prodigal. One street might be the "prodigality" of the younger son's narcissistic personality and the subsequent wasting of his share of his father's financial estate given to him. Another path would be to focus on the judgmental stance of righteousness of the older "offended" brother toward his younger sibling as well as his expressed anger at his too all forgiving father. Finally there is the avenue of the person of the father of the sons. Jesus' focus lies with the father. And it is to him that Jesus invites us.

In a recent catechesis on the "Lord's Prayer" Pope Francis reflects on the person of the father in the Gospel parable. The Holy Father states: "Let us imagine [*the*] prayer recited by the prodigal son, after having experienced the embrace of his father who had long awaited him, a father who does not remember the offensive words the son had said to him, a father who now simply makes him understand how much he has been missed. ...Let us ask ourselves: is it possible that you, O God, really know only love? Do you not know hatred? No—God would respond—I know only love.

Where in you is vengeance, the demand for justice, anger at your wounded honour? And God would respond: I know only love.

In that parable the father's manner of conduct somehow recalls the spirit of a *mother*. It is especially mothers who excuse their children, who protect them, who do not suspend empathy for them, who continue to love them, even when they would no longer deserve anything. ...

God seeks you, even if you do not seek him. God loves you, even if you have forgotten about him. God glimpses beauty in you, even if you think you have squandered all your talents in vain. God is not only like a father; he is like a mother who never stops loving her little child.

...

It may be that we too happen to walk on paths far from God, as happened to the prodigal son; or to sink into a loneliness that makes us feel abandoned in the world; or, even to make mistakes and be paralyzed by a sense of guilt. In those difficult moments, we can still find the strength to pray, to begin with the word 'Abba', but said with the tender feeling of a child: 'Abba', 'Dad'. He does not hide his face from us. Remember well: perhaps one has bad things within, things he does not know how to resolve, much bitterness for having done this and that... He does not hide his face. He does not close himself off in silence. Say 'Father' to Him and He will answer you. You have a father. 'Yes, but I am a delinquent...'. But you have a Father who loves you! Say 'Father' to him, start to pray in this way, and in the silence he will tell us that he has never lost sight of us. But Father, I have done this...'. -[*The father interrupts us saying*]/'I have never lost sight of you; I have seen everything. But I have always been there, close to you, faithful to my love for you'. That will be his answer. Never forget to say 'Father.'

(Pope Francis. *General Audience*. Wednesday, January 16, 2019, Pope Paul VI Hall, Vatican City State, Europe.)

"Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold new things have come. And all of this is from God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ." (II Cor. 5:17,18). "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord." (Ps. 34).

31 March 2019
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