

Saturday 2nd of Lent

Gospel text (Lk 15,1-3.11-32): Tax collectors and sinners were seeking the company of Jesus, all of them eager to hear what He had to say. But the Pharisees and the scribes frowned at this, muttering: «This man welcomes sinners and eats with them». So Jesus told them this parable: «There was a man with two sons. The younger said to his father: ‘Give me my share of the estate’. So the father divided his property between them. Some days later, the younger son gathered all his belongings and started off for a distant land where he squandered his wealth in loose living. Having spent everything, he was hard pressed when a severe famine broke out in that land. So he hired himself out to a well-to-do citizen of that place and was sent to work on a pig farm. So famished was he that he longed to fill his stomach even with the food given to the pigs, but no one offered him anything. Finally coming to his senses, he said: ‘How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will get up and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against God and before you. I no longer deserve to be called your son. Treat me then as one of your hired servants’. With that thought in mind he set off for his father's house.

»He was still a long way off when his father caught sight of him. His father was so deeply moved with compassion that he ran out to meet him, threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. The son said: ‘Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you. I no longer deserve to be called your son...’. But the father turned to his servants: ‘Quick! Bring out the finest robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and kill it. We shall celebrate and have a feast, for this son of mine

was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and is found'. And the celebration began.

»Meanwhile, the elder son had been working in the fields. As he returned and was near the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what it was all about. The servant answered: 'Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father is so happy about it that he has ordered this celebration and killed the fattened calf'. The elder son became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and pleaded with him. The indignant son said: 'Look, I have slaved for you all these years. Never have I disobeyed your orders. Yet you have never given me even a young goat to celebrate with my friends. Then when this son of yours returns after squandering your property with loose women, you kill the fattened calf for him'. The father said: 'My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But this brother of yours was dead, and has come back to life. He was lost and is found. And for that we had to rejoice and be glad'».

«I will get up and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against God and before you»

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain)

Today we see our Father's mercy, His distinctive feature in Heaven, while gazing at an orphan Mankind —orphan because forgetful— which does not know it is a child of God. Cronin speaks of a son that left home, squandered all his money, his health, the family honor... was finally imprisoned. Shortly before being freed, he wrote to his home: if he was forgiven, they should hang a white handkerchief in the apple tree, next to the railway. If he could spot it, he would return home; otherwise, he would never come back... The day of his freedom, while arriving home, he didn't dare to look... Would there be a handkerchief? «Open your eyes!... look!», a friend

tells him. And he remained speechless: on the apple tree there was not a single white handkerchief... there were hundreds of them; it was full of white handkerchiefs.

It reminds us of the Rembrandt's painting where it can be seen the son that comes back, destitute and famished, who is hugged by an old man, with two different hands: one, from the father that holds him tight; the other, from the mother, sweet and tender, that caresses him. God is Father and Mother...

«Father, I have sinned» (Lk 15:21), we wish to say it too, and feel God embrace in the Sacrament of Confession, while participating in the Eucharistic feast: «We shall celebrate and have a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and is found» (Lk 15:23-24). Thus, since «God is waiting for us —each and every day!— like that father of the parable was waiting for his prodigal son» (Saint Josemaria), let's keep on marching in with Jesus to the encounter with the Father, where all becomes clear: «The mystery of man can only be solved through the mystery of the Incarnated Word» (II Vatican Council).

The protagonist is always the Father. Let's beg the desert of Lent to take us to internalize this appeal to participate in the divine compassion, as life is nothing but gradually returning to the Father.