

Saturday of the Second Week of Lent

Gospel text (Lk 15:1-3.11-32): Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So to them Jesus addressed this parable. "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father.

While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly, bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a

feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began. Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"

"I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you'"

Fr. Jordi POU i Sabater
(Sant Jordi Desvalls, Girona, 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 must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been 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 Escrivá), let's keep on marching in with Jesus to the encounter with the Father, where all becomes clear: “Only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light” (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.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

•

“The parable of the prodigal son expresses in a simple but profound way the reality of conversion. Mercy is manifested in its true and proper aspect when it restores to value, promotes and draws good from all the forms of evil existing in the world and in man.” (Saint John Paul II)

•

“Our God is a God who waits. The Lord is faithful to his promise because he cannot deny himself. He is faithful. And, in this way, he waited for all of us, throughout all of history. He is the God who waits for us always.” (Francis)

•

“The process of conversion and repentance was described by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son, the center of which is the merciful father (Lk 15:11-24): The fascination of illusory

freedom, the abandonment of the father's house; ... his repentance and decision to declare himself guilty before his father; the journey back; the father's generous welcome; the father's joy - all these are characteristic of the process of conversion ..." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 1439)