

THE PRODIGAL SON:



"The wealth of grace that You have given me, I have wasted sinfully in my wretchedness; all to no purpose I have left my true home, and as the Prodigal, I have scattered my riches deceitfully among the demons. But now on my return, accept me as the Prodigal, O compassionate Father, and save me."

Matins for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son

The Third Pre-Greatfast Sunday

Father Joseph Kapusnak

"Brothers and sisters, let us learn the meaning of this mystery. For when the Prodigal Son ran back from sin to his father's house, his loving father came out to meet him and kissed him. He restored to the Prodigal the tokens of his proper glory,...."

Vespers for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son

"The tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Him, at which the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.' " (Luke 15:1) This was why Jesus told the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Notice that Jesus does not rebuke them for their hypocrisy but gently tells them the parables of mercy in language they can understand and relate to. The crowning one is, of course, the prodigal son. Some commentators call it the Parable of the Loving Father. On this third pre-greatfast Sunday, the prodigal son's sorrow for past sins is presented by our Byzantine Catholic Church as the third requisite necessary for true repentance.

Let's look at the characters of this parable. The younger son grossly insults his father by asking for his share of the inheritance. In effect he was saying: "Father, die so I can have my share." To compound the sin, he goes far away and squanders it all on loose living. How often we think that because we are out of sight of our guardians or loved ones we are out of the sight of God. How foolish! Only when the son is in utter squalor does he come to himself and realize his sins. We can only be truly ourselves when we are in union with the Father. To be apart is to be in sin and truly out of our senses. Total and complete unity will only be ours in the Kingdom.

The father waits with love and yearning for his son. "While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was deeply moved." He completely forgave and forgot his son's greed. He incarnated in himself the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Can a mother forget her infant.... Even if she should forget I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name." (49:15)

The older son was enraged at the love, compassion, and forgiveness of the father. He acted just like the Scribes and the Pharisees mentioned above. He really didn't realize how much the father also loved him. He didn't hear: "My son, you are with me always, and everything I have is yours." His heart was too hard to show any compassion or forgiveness or joy for his brother. He could not understand that "We had to celebrate and rejoice! This brother of yours was dead, and has come back to life. He was lost, and is found." May we ourselves not judge others, and may we rejoice with those who are forgiven and repent.

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 15:11-32