

Fourth Sunday of Lent, C
The Prodigal Father

Introduction...

Awhile ago I had a funeral for a fellow who suffered from the disease of alcoholism. He had left his wife and children, lost his job, and distanced himself from his whole family. He lived in squalor. He struggled with his alcoholism, sometimes being sober for several weeks. But in the end he would return to the bottle, and the squalor.

When Death knocked on his door, I wonder if he greeted Death wanting to return to His Father, and say to his Father...

Father, you gave me my life's energies, my talents, my loved ones... and I have squandered them, and spent my life's riches poorly. I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son. But treat me as you would one of your hired servants... just take me back home...

And I wonder if Our Father hugged his lost son,
and ordered the heavenly servants to get him a robe,
and put a ring on his finger, and sandals on his feet...
and prepare a banquet for his son who was lost, but is now found, who was dead, but now lives?

And I wonder if the other members of the family can forgive their brother his alcoholism and how it effected them...

how he hurt them and neglected them over the years?

And can these other members of the family accept Our Father's burning desire to bring their younger brother back into his heavenly home, even

after he squandered his riches and their love? Can the family forgive him all of the heartache he caused them?

Can the family reflect on this story of Jesus about the Prodigal Son, the son who threw everything away?

One time I heard a recovering alcoholic in AA – I have dealt a lot with people in AA, and I know that it has saved the lives of a lot of alcoholics – I heard this recovering alcoholic say that he deeply believed that God’s love is greater than anything we could do – if we turned to God and asked forgiveness.

I hope that the fellow I buried was able to do that on his death bed. We don’t know. Nobody was there. But that is our hope. We Catholics are always a people of hope.

What do we learn from this story?

- ❖ Don’t squander what God has given you... your life’s energies, your talents, your time.
- ❖ Don’t take your loved ones for granted... stay in touch, and be sure to tell them often that you love them.
- ❖ If you have someone with the disease of alcoholism or drug addiction in your family or as a close friend, get some help thru Alinon – you can’t handle it alone, and there is no “best way” to handle it.
- ❖ If you have been separated from a loved one because of alcoholism, or drug addiction... continue to pray for them, even if you can’t communicate with them.... ask the loving Father to help you to forgive – not enable, but forgive.
- ❖ If you have a problem with alcoholism or drugs, get some help – it’s difficult to go it alone.

And never forget that our loving God never gives up on anyone... and isn't that what the story of the Prodigal Son is all about – it's not the Son who is Prodigal... it's the Father with a Father's Prodigal Love....

Conclusion

As we continue with this Mass let's offer ourselves, our talents and gifts, our character defects and failings – to our Prodigal Father.

As we remember Christ's prodigal love for us as poured out on Calvary, we can ask his mercy and his strength to deal with whatever life brings.

Remember, Christ didn't take away all suffering... he entered into our broken world and knows what suffering is all about... and he still loves us and wants to be with us.

At Communion time invite Christ into your heart.

Let him know that you love him.

Accept His love and seek his strength.

Amen.