

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.(KJV)

God's Holy Church is moving with certainty toward the beginning of Great Lent. The Sunday of the Prodigal Son reminds each of us that God desires our return to His welcoming embrace.

Regardless of how far we have departed from God's desired path, God awaits and welcomes our return. We may have departed from God's ways intentionally. We may have moved away without thinking clearly.

Returning to God's loving embrace is encouraged in the present Gospel. Jesus said: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."(Lk. 5:32)
The father welcomed the returning son with great joy.

St. Luke's Gospel is very clear: "...**joy shall be in heaven** over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. (Lk.15:7)

Persons hesitant and reluctant to return to God can draw courage from the present Gospel. God is good, merciful and forgiving. God's love heals and restores wholeness to the person wanting to put sin behind and to begin anew in Christ.

The Church is where new beginnings in Jesus Christ begin and continue. The Church welcomes believers desiring to begin anew. The Church nourishes the believer in the renewed journey in Christ.

Every believer to some degree departs from the path to God's Kingdom begun at Holy Baptism. Repentance and return enable renewal and new beginnings. The Sunday of the Prodigal Son reassures believers that returning to God is beneficial.

The Church stands in contrast to the world. The Church is a foretaste of God's Eternal Kingdom. Perils exist abundantly in the world. Believers too often fall prey to the perils of the world.

The Prodigal Son came to himself and returned to his father. The returning son experienced the embracing love of the father. The Church calls all believers to take the steps to return today on this Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

Great Lent is on the horizon in God's Holy Church. The time for full unity with the Lord God is at hand. Putting away life in sin is to begin now and continue. God is present to welcome the believer in the effort of renewal.

The heart, mind and soul benefit when the believer returns from the far country. Family life, work and community life improve when the believer returns to the Lord God.

God strengthens, nourishes and leads the believer to the eternal kingdom when the believer rejects the way of sin in the far country. Trust in God is well-placed. Trust in God yields desirable results.

The hunger in the soul seeks the satisfying nourishment found only in the Lord God. The Prodigal Son found the nourishment he sought when he returned to his father.

God gives each person life. It is fitting the person acknowledges God as the Source of Life and turns to God for life and life eternal. The Church is ever-present for the attentive believer to follow the path to the Heavenly Kingdom.

The Prodigal Son knew the home where his life originated. His life was renewed when he returned home. God's doors are always open for returning sons and daughters seeking renewal.

The love of God is inexhaustible. God's welcoming arms are all encompassing. Every Prodigal Son and Daughter is welcome. In God's House there is always room for everyone choosing to sincerely enter.

Thank God for the Church setting forth this Sunday of the Prodigal Son each year. Thank God for the Heavenly Father welcoming Prodigal Sons and Daughters. Thank God for the opportunity to be renewed in Christ.

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Synaxis of the Three Holy Hierarchs. January 30/February 12, 2023. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic