

**4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR C 2022.**

**THE RETURN:**

Today's parable is one of the greatest for the Lenten season, it is family based, and applies even today to our current society. It is commonly known as the **Parable of the Prodigal Son**...and it can also be called the **Parable of the Older Son**...it can even be called the **Parable of the Forgiving Father**.

All three of the titles suit this parable very well and speak to us in different but powerful ways. Let us open our hearts and minds to this great parable today.

The prodigal son **demands for his inheritance, he gets it, and he goes off to an unnamed distant country.** He lives lavishly, **squanders everything, and loses it all!**

This distant unnamed country may not mean just a **place**, it might mean a **way of living, a state of the heart, or a situation** where you live away from **God, your family, or even the Church.** Perhaps an **immoral, spiritual, and even slow social decay.** It could mean living away in your own fantasy world not minding and caring about anything or anybody. It is a **condition of life indeed.**

We are lured by situations where sin is made to look like fun:

***-Sin might be fun until a person becomes addicted to drugs.***

***-Sin might be fun until one becomes an alcoholic, and can no longer pull themselves up, hurting others and even themselves.***

***-Sin might be fun until infidelity breaks and destroys the marriage and family.***

***-Yes, sin is fun until arrogance, pride, greed, and deception distort and bend our life leaving us disinherited, out of shape, and *isolated* from God and others...thus ruining us morally, spiritually, and socially - Could this be the distant country in our current time? We all have our “distant country” in one way or another. What might your distant country be?***

The prodigal son fortunately comes to his **senses and realizes his mistake**. **“I will leave this place and go to My father”** and tell him, **“I have sinned against heaven and against you”**. This is the call to all of us during this Lenten season, this is what the prodigal son is teaching us, to be **repentant and turn to God**. Do we have the courage to admit our weakness and our faults and say **I have sinned?** The prodigal son no longer blames his father, his brother, the workers, or society, but finally he turns to look at and blame himself.

As human beings we tend to pass the blame and load it onto others, whether **parents, teachers, politicians, Church leaders, circumstances of the laity, the social environment, the media, and even scandals**. When we do that we are really hurting ourselves as we remain trapped in destructive sinful patterns and cycles. We need the grace of God and to take **responsibility over our lives and actions**. We should have courage like the prodigal son and say **Father I have sinned**. This is the real awakening for us this Lent.

Like the older son, sometimes we too feel somebody who repents shouldn't be forgiven, must pay for his actions and mistakes, that he should **suffer, have pain, be humiliated** and **agonize** learning from their mistakes. Jesus didn't take that path...rather he took the path **of calling, accepting, and forgiving** all who realise their mistakes and repent. If one repents they don't need recrimination, but rather **acceptance and love**, so that they may walk back with confidence, especially during Lent to the joy of Easter.

This is the path the father of the prodigal son took in **accepting the repentant son back and in seeking Reconciliation for his family**. This could be classified as a ministry of **Reconciliation... and in building bridges...and in destroying the walls we have put up ourselves...a new fresh start which we all need in life**. This is the great call of Lent.

-The prodigal son teaches us the importance of **saying I am sorry**.

-The older son teaches us the **need for those who repent to be forgiven**.

-The father is the **negotiator, and the reconciler in building bridges** teaching us to love.

***May the HOPE of THE THREE CHARACTERS (in the parable of the Prodigal Son) HAVE A LESSON to teach YOU too this Lent!?***

