

Preamble

As Vincentians and as Christians our hearts often go out to the poor. Poor being loosely defined as lacking in one sense or another. How that poverty was attained is often a point of contention with those whose mission it is to help the poor.

Some times it can be hard to feel sympathetic to someone who has squandered their wealth or does little to alleviate the poverty of their present circumstances.

It is times like these that one must turn to scripture and pray for guidance and enlightenment. The parable of "The Return of the Prodigal Son" recently has become a source of inspiration to me. With the help of Henri J.M. Nouwen's book based on the painting of Rembrandt of the Prodigal Son and his delving into the depths of passion that motivated Rembrandt I have gained a new sense of understanding and hopefully a deeper love of Our Lord and Savior.

Whenever we turn our back on God and do what we want to knowing that it is not the right thing to do in a sense we are taking what God has given us and gone off to a distant country

Reflection

Theme: “Jesus’ invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of parables, a characteristic feature of his teaching.(261) ... The parables are like mirrors for man:” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 546)

Opening Reading: Luke 15: 11-32

Reflection:

Henri Nouwen’s book “The Return of the Prodigal Son” has become for me a great source of enjoyment and inspiration and has inspired me to use some of his thoughts and insights as our reflection today.

How can we be The Prodigal Son?

Henri Nouwen says, “I am the prodigal son everytime I search for unconditional love where it can it cannot be found.”

“Yet over and over again I have left home. I have fled the hands of blessing and run off to faraway places searching for love!” (page 43)

“Addiction” he says, “might be the best word to explain the lostness that so deeply permeates contemporary society.” (page 42)

“The addictive life can aptly be designated a life lived in a distant county.” (page 43)

These quotations helped put the prodigal son into context for me in our contemporary world. I now have the mirror placed before me and if I clean the surface I can see myself as I truly am.

Yet as dark as that reflection is I can see a distant glow beckoning and a far off voice whispers, that the love I seek can not be supplied by any human being.

In the solitude and loneliness of that distant land I turn to the warmth of that faraway light and begin my journey home.

How will I be received when I return home?

Will I be shunned, an outcast?

Henri Nouwen says, “ This painful experience brought me to the core of the spiritual struggle for the right choice. God says, “ I am offering you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you ... may live in the love of

Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, holding fast to him.” (Deuteronomy 30: 19-20)

This has only skimmed the surface of the parable - we have sensed but not experienced the return of the prodigal son into the full warmth of the father’s embrace. We have not felt or experienced the sense of resentment expressed by the elder son, but, we have begun the journey.

In the time remaining I would like to take some time to reflect on some of the ideas that were brought up and if you would like to share some of these thoughts or if you have any other points you would like to discuss we can do that until our time is up.

#1 - When reading this parable and looking into the mirror, what do you see?

#2 - What inheritance have you taken and gone off to a distant land?

#3 - What is your addiction or distant land?

#4 - What makes you turn around and return home?

Closing Prayer

Magnificat of a Prodigal Child.

Almighty Father, my soul rejoices in your mercy and love, and my spirit rejoices in Jesus my Savior.

I had wandered far and was lost and forsaken, I was close to the eternal abyss.

Your eternal light shone bright in the distance and I could sense the love and warmth of your forgiveness.

Your guiding hand rested lightly on my shoulder as I was brought back to the flock, into the warm embrace of your love and mercy.

I thank you God for my freedom of choice.

I thank you God for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

I thank you God for the sacrifice of Your Beloved Son.

I thank you God for allowing me to be dead to sin and alive to You.

My Almighty Father, Son and Holy Spirit to You I give glory and praise now and forever.

Amen.