

March 27, 2022
4th Sunday of Lent
Jos 5:9a, 10-12
Ps 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7
2 Cor 5:17-21
Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

BE THAT FATHER!

I would like to invite you today to use your imagination/creativity. Imagine yourself in the parable particularly as the father of the prodigal son. You are hurting because your son disrespected you. He insulted you. He was arrogant towards you in asking for his inheritance. He decided to cut ties with you. He chose to disconnect his relationship with you. He left you without even saying goodbye. After squandering his wealth and in dire need, he is now coming back to you – **will you accept him back? Will you forgive him and forget everything? Will you give him a new beginning?**

These questions I am throwing at you right now are the same questions I actually asked my friend about. His response was, **"Can you give me time to think about it?"** After a minute or two, my friend said, **"I don't think I can forgive him for what he has done to me. The wounds he inflicted to me are so deep that it will take time to heal. Perhaps, I will tell him – 'I am sorry I am not ready to welcome you back!'"**

If you are the father, **what will you tell your prodigal son? What message are you going to convey to him?**

Human tendency is to get even. We, as humans, have the propensity to keep grudges. Letting go of the hurts is not something we are fond of doing. We would rather cut the ties than start anew. Thus, what the father did in the parable is difficult to follow.

In the gospel proclaimed our Lord Jesus shares a parable with us. In this parable he gives us a clear picture of God. He conveys to us that God does not keep grudges despite of our unfaithfulness/ingratitude/indifference. God does not give up on us. God remains hopeful that we will humble ourselves and return to him wholeheartedly. God is always on the lookout for our homecoming, ready to embrace us and start anew. God rejoices when he finds us coming back to our

senses and surrendering our lives to him. God is not only forgiving but also merciful. He deals with us with goodness/kindness. God is truly overflowing with unconditional love. This is the Good News that we have to keep in our hearts. This is the Good News that we have to share with others.

Try to imagine our God using our standard of keeping grudges and getting even. Imagine if God is not forgiving. We will surely be reduced to nothing/nonentity. New beginnings will just be a dream. Rejoicing with him will be farfetched. Thanks be to God his standard is totally different from us!

We are now on the **4th Sunday of Lent**. This Sunday is also called '**Rejoice Sunday**' (*Laetare Sunday*). The gospel proclaimed describes to us the reason for our joy and the reason is this –**God's tremendous love for us has been revealed in Christ Jesus**. His passion, death, and resurrection brought salvation, not condemnation, reconciliation, not hostility.

What is the invitation/challenge of the gospel proclaimed to us then? Let me illustrate it by sharing with you a story.

The story is told about a soldier during combat. He was drinking heavily and was a constant menace to his comrades. His commanding officer had him on the carpet several times. But on this occasion, he was ready to throw the book at him. Said the colonel to his lieutenant, "**I have given him every break.**" The officer responded, "**Sir, you have punished him, and it hasn't worked. Why not forgive him?**" The colonel accepted the advice. To the soldier he said, "**I have punished you many times. Punishment has not worked. This time I am going to forgive you. Your many offenses will be removed from your personnel folder.**" The soldier, who had expected a court martial, broke down and wept. From that time on, he never gets drunk again.

As we continue our Eucharistic celebration, let us thank God for being merciful and forgiving Father to us all. May his mercy and forgiveness extended to us be not in vain. Instead, may it inspire us to apply it in our relationship with each other. If we do, then we are no longer living in our own human standards but God's standards!

God bless our Lenten journey!