



# Daily Reflections

**March 23, 2019**

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## Scripture

**Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32**

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying,

"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So to them Jesus addressed this parable.

"A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.'

So the father divided the property between them.

After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country

where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation.

When he had freely spent everything,

a severe famine struck that country,

and he found himself in dire need.

So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine.

And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any.

Coming to his senses he thought,

'How many of my father's hired workers

have more than enough food to eat,

but here am I, dying from hunger.

I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him,

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.  
I no longer deserve to be called your son;  
treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."

So he got up and went back to his father.

While he was still a long way off,  
his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion.

He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.

His son said to him,

'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you;  
I no longer deserve to be called your son.'

But his father ordered his servants,

'Quickly, bring the finest robe and put it on him;  
put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Take the fattened calf and slaughter it.

Then let us celebrate with a feast,

because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again;  
he was lost, and has been found.'

Then the celebration began.

Now the older son had been out in the field  
and, on his way back, as he neared the house,  
he heard the sound of music and dancing.

He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean.

The servant said to him,

'Your brother has returned  
and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf  
because he has him back safe and sound.'

He became angry,

and when he refused to enter the house,  
his father came out and pleaded with him.

He said to his father in reply,

'Look, all these years I served you  
and not once did I disobey your orders;  
yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends.

But when your son returns

who swallowed up your property with prostitutes,  
for him you slaughter the fattened calf.'

He said to him,

'My son, you are here with me always;

everything I have is yours.  
But now we must celebrate and rejoice,  
because your brother was dead and has come to life again;  
he was lost and has been found."

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## **Our Scripture Reflection**

Today's Gospel reading requires little commentary because of its familiarity and beauty. And though the focus throughout the years has been on the mercy that the Father shows His younger son, little has been said about the oldest son. He was loyal to his Father it seems and asked for nothing in return. Yet he is not without guilt because of his attitude. He is bitterly resentful. He neither trusted his Father nor truly respected Him. And because of his hardened heart, he was just as "lost" as his little brother. Both boys were in need of forgiveness and Grace.

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## **Food for your Journey**

Henri Nouwen, one of the great spiritual writers of the twentieth century, commented on the "lostness" of both sons in the story of the Prodigal Son.

He wrote, "Did you ever notice how lost you are when you are resentful? It's a very deep lostness. The younger son gets lost in a much more spectacular way — giving in to his lust and his greed, using women, playing poker, and losing his money. His wrongdoing is very clear-cut. He knows it and everybody else does, too. Because of it he can come back, and he can be forgiven. The problem with resentment is that it is not so clear-cut: It's not spectacular. And it is not overt, and it can be covered by the appearance of a holy life. Resentment is so pernicious because it sits very deep in you, in your heart, in your bones, and in your flesh, and often you don't even know it is there. You think you're so good. But in fact you are lost in a very profound way.

— Henri Nouwen, *From Fear to Love: Lenten Reflections on the Parable of the Prodigal Son*, (Fenton, Missouri: Creative Communications for the Parish, 1998), 13-14.

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## **A Prayer from the Heart**

Dear God, So often we feel "owed" by You because on the surface level we seem to be good and faithful. But a deeper look under the hood during Lent reveals a lot of dirt and ugliness. Rather than obey You out of love we obey You with the expectation of a reward. Lord, soften our hardened hearts and make us humble. Help us to realize that everything we have and everything that we are is because of Your generosity towards us for which we could never say thank You enough. Amen