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Saturday's Gospel: Rediscovering God the Father's Face

Gospel for Saturday in the 2nd
Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 15:1-3.11-32*)

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable:

"There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of

property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a

distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out

and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'”

Commentary

The Gospel for today's Mass is one of the best-known passages in the New Testament. In it we are told about the mercy of the Father and, at the same time, about two types of hearts, two

types of sons, each unable to savor the love that surrounds and inundates them. In the context of conversion, since we are in the season of Lent, the story encourages us to never tire of rediscovering the Father's face, no matter how well we think we already know him. For we need to come to know him with our heart (cf. *2 Cor 5:16*).

It is striking to see how the son who leaves home acts. He thinks he deserves the inheritance and almost demands it. He seems unaware that he is seeking only the pleasure of the present moment, and is forced to feed pigs to provide for himself. His return to his father's home is motivated not by love but by necessity; his hardened heart leads him to project his own way of judging things and people onto his father. Also striking is the attitude of the son who remains at home, also with a hardened heart, unable to

understand his father's love and mercy for his brother.

These attitudes speak of what may be in our own hearts. And they remind us of the need to continually rediscover God's love for us, the love of a Father who is well aware of our failings. He has called us to be his children and, on his part, that call never ceases. He has called us to live in freedom, not as slaves. The two sons in the parable ended up living as slaves: one, trapped in his passions; the other, in a twisted understanding of his obligation. Saint Paul reminds us that *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (2 Cor 3:17). Not freedom as an *opportunity for the flesh, but through love to be servants of one another* (Gal 5:13). From these two sons we learn the need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us to continually rediscover the loving face of our Father God. For from there flows the strength we

need to live our faith with joy every day.

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