



## March 14, 2010 The Fourth Sunday of Lent

*"We implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God." 2 Corinthians 5: 20*

Dear Friends;

There is a recent country song (I do not know who sings it) that tells the story of a father whose daughter has left home and ended contact with him. The refrain of the song tells us the message the father left on the telephone answer machine. It says "it doesn't matter where you have been, it does not matter what you have done you always have a place here come on home we have a lot of catching up to do."

There always comes a difficult time in parent-child relationships. A child needs to develop independence if he or she is going to become a fully functioning mature adult. Parents also have the responsibility to guide the maturation process. It is a difficult balance that needs to be negotiated.

Sometimes children think that they should have no guidance from a parent and some parents think that they have to control every aspect of their children's lives including their children's personalities. Sometimes these conflicting views can lead to estrangement. And sometimes some separation is necessary for one to appreciate the other's role.

In the Story of the Prodigal Son from the Gospel of Luke we see that the son felt like he did not need any outside direction in his life. He only associated with his peers, people who knew no more than he did. They wanted the same things he wanted, so he learned to fight. When he won he bragged and when he failed he was envious and bitter. In the end he ends up wallowing in the mud of his own self pity. Some would say he made his bed now he can lie in it.

We are all the children of God and many of us are not comfortable with that title because it impinges on our idea that we are "self-made." We can behave like the prodigal son—our culture encourages it. We hang out with only the people who think like us. We do not need anyone's direction but our own willfulness. And we often end up bitter and envious—until we come to our senses.

Coming to our senses or repentance is more than just saying "I was wrong" or "I am sorry." It is not so much about us but what God is doing for us. God does not leave us in our self-created mud. Writer Herman Hendrickx says that this parable of the Prodigal Son redefines repentance. It says that repentance is defined as the "acceptance of being found." It is not about us wallowing in our own self-recriminations—in fact it is not about us—but God's love for us in spite of ourselves.

The questions the parable raises for us today is can we surrender our own egos and allow God to love us—not for what we have done or not done—but for who we are the beloved children of God.

Let me suggest that for the remainder of this Lenten season we reflect on this God who so insanely loves us, including those who have not always done what they were supposed to do.

Peace,

*Fr. Ron*