

FAITH AND REASON

The Prodigal Son: One of life's greatest heartbreaks is unreturned love. It has been the theme of numerous plays and novels. It has ruptured marriages and friendships. Many good parents for whom sacrifice for their children was a daily fact of life, ask in bewilderment "Where did I go wrong" ... "What more could I have done"? Such parents share the heartbreak of Shakespeare's King Lear: "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child". The wife of Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian novelist, used to beg her husband in her old age, and just before their tragic parting, to read to her the love letters he had written to her when he was a young man... Unreturned love, so common in our world is a heartbreak.

Under Jewish Law a father was not free to dispense with his property as he wished. The elder son must get two-thirds, and the younger son one-third (Deut 21;17) It was by no means unusual for a father to distribute his wealth before he died, if he wished to retire from actual management of affairs. But there is a definite heartless callousness in the request of the younger son: Give me now what I will get when you die... I am leaving! The father did not resist, the father in all probability concluded that his young son was about to get a lesson, the hard way. The young son wastes his inheritance, as if life was a holiday "easy come, easy go" Eventually, he learned his lesson in living and about this world when you are "down on your uppers". He was determined to return to his father, not because he had changed and become a better son, not because he had grown in love for his father. Oh no!... he had decided that he must return to his father because he could not live with himself anymore. He was thinking of himself and nobody else. The prodigal son, by his behavior, reminds us of a valuable lesson in communication. People change... not because we go to the outer limits in patience and advice... No!... they change when they hurt so much that they cannot live with themselves anymore. They have had it.... they are at the end of their rope!

Now the prodigal will be grateful if his father accepts him as a servant. This was the lowest rank of slaves; a hired servant was employed only as a day laborer. The ordinary slave was, in some sense, a member of the family, the hired servant was not and could be dismissed at a days' notice. The father rushed out to meet his son and treated him royally.

Since the parable is for our benefit, we must apply it to ourselves. Are

you the prodigal son, or daughter? Take care that you know all the questions before you know all the answers. Respect the knowledge of your parents, they learned, from hard experience, as will you! Have you paused long enough to realize that they are your best friends and like all true friends they will not agree with everything you do or say. When they express concern, it is not that they do not trust you, but rather those whom you may meet.... and with whom you associate. Do you believe that your parents really care about you, that they really love you? then if you do, why don't you trust them?

Are you the older son? Are you so consumed with justice, as you understand it, that there is no room for mercy, for forgiveness? "Remember that love is the soul of justice" (St Thomas) There are many prodigal sons in this world, who will never come home, because there is someone at home who is so full of bitterness, so full of anger, that they will not recognize a brother, but rather "this son of yours" This is precisely what happens when the emotions are either suppressed or give free rein. Emotions were given to us by God to enable... us to be better human beings.

Which means, the emotions of themselves are blind... They must be always under the serene control of the mind, an informed mind. When they are not, expect trouble. It is already in the making, as they say!

Are you the Father or the Mother? Then you must endure the pain of your son leaving home to pursue a goal which, which is going to be a crushing failure to another generation, you are out of touch. Do not, in your pain, slam the door, demolish bridges, poison the wells... For if you do, there is no way back when your sin needs you as he most assuredly will.

Pray for the grace to endure the pain that accompanies duty, responsibility and love. Take a firm, but loving stand. Do not abandon or undermine the principles by which you live. Tell your son that you love him. That this is his home, and he is always welcome there, should he wish to return. Remind him, do not ask your mother and I to be pleased with you as you abandon all we ever taught you to be and to do. You have decided to do that, we cannot.

Once President Lincoln was asked how he was going to treat the rebellious Southerners when they had finally been defeated and had returned to the Union of the United States. The questioner thought that the President would react in a vindictive and vengeful manner. The President simply said, "I will treat them as if they had never gone away".... **A Meditation by Fr. William C Mooney**

Reading the Holy Scriptures confers two benefits. It trains the mind to understand them; it turns man's attention from the follies of the world and leads him to the love of God. Two kinds of study are called for here. We must first learn how the Scriptures are to be understood, and then see how to expound them with profit and in a manner worthy of them . . . No one can understand holy Scripture without constant reading . . . The more you devote yourself to the study of the sacred utterances, the richer will be your understanding of them, just as the more the soil is tilled, the richer the harvest... **St. Isadore of Seville**

I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has made it so, in order that men should fear before him. That which is, already has been that which is to be, already has been and God seeks what has been driven away... **Ecclesiastes 3:14-15**

We trust ourselves to a doctor because we suppose he knows his business. He orders an operation which involves cutting away part of our body and we accept it. We are grateful to him and pay him a large fee because we judge he would not act as he does unless the remedy were necessary, and we must rely on his skill. Yet we are unwilling to treat God in the same way! It looks as if we do not trust His wisdom and are afraid, He cannot do His job properly. We allow ourselves to be operated on by a man who may easily make a mistake—a mistake which may cost us our life—and protest when God sets to work on us. If we could see all He sees, we would unhesitatingly wish all He wishes... **Fr. Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	Jesus hath many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His cross.
Monday	When you feel in need of a compliment, give one to someone else.
Tuesday	The reason why Christ is unknown today is because His Mother is unknown.
Wednesday	Purity of heart is what enables us to see.
Thursday	Great things are done by devotion to one idea.
Friday	I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.
Saturday	In confession there is mercy. Believe it firmly, do not doubt, do not hesitate, never despair of the mercy of God.

Be protectors of God's gifts: The vocation of being a "protector," however, is not just something involving us Christians alone—it also has a prior dimension which is simply human, involving everyone. It means protecting all creation, the beauty of the created world, as the Book of Genesis tells us and as Saint Francis of Assisi showed us. It means respecting each of God's creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about. It means caring for one another in our families: husbands and wives first protect one another, and then, as parents, they care for their children, and children themselves, in time, protect their parents. It means building sincere friendships in which we protect one another in trust, respect, and goodness. In the end, everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it. Be protectors of God's gifts! **Homily of Pope Francis**

An Expression of the Person: Still, man cannot be authentically free, cannot realize his own humanity, if he does not recognize and does not live the transcendence of his own being over the world and his rapport with God. To the uplifting of man belongs not only the promotion of his humanity, but also the opening of his humanity to God. Culture implies giving to man, to every man and to the community of man a human and divine dimension that springs from the depth of the spirit, from the clearness of thought and the generous disinterestedness of love. As I have previously said: where freedom does not exist, we cannot have culture. It is because of this that the true culture of people, its full humanization, cannot develop within the constraints of political or economic power, but must be helped by the one and the other by every form, of public and private initiative that conforms to true humanism, to the tradition and authentic spirit of the people. Culture that is born from freedom should then spread in a regime of freedom such as your work, your dedication, your professionalism is constantly committed to defend ... **Pope John Paul II**

The Mission of My Life: God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments. Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about... **John Henry Newman**

In His Will is Our Peace
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