

FAITH AND REASON

Dear brothers and sisters The Gospel of today's Liturgy presents us the three parables of mercy. This is what they are called because they show God's merciful heart. Jesus tells them to respond to the grumblings of the pharisees and the scribes, who say: "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them". They are scandalized because Jesus was among sinners. If for them this is religiously scandalous, Jesus, by welcoming sinners and eating with them, reveals to us that God is just like that: God excludes no one, he wants everyone at his banquet, because he loves everyone as his children: everyone, no-one excluded, everyone. The three parables, then, summarize the heart of the Gospel: God is the Father and comes in search of us whenever we are lost.

Indeed, the protagonists of the parables, who represent God, are a shepherd who searches for the lost sheep, a woman who finds the lost coin, and the father of the prodigal son. Let us dwell on an aspect that all these three protagonists have in common. All three of them essentially have something in common, which we might define thus: restlessness for something that is missing – whether you are missing a sheep, you are missing a coin, you are missing a son – the unease of missing something, all three protagonists of these parables are uneasy because they are missing something. All three, after all, if they were to calculate, could rest easy: the shepherd is missing a sheep, but he has ninety-nine others – "Let it be lost..."; the woman is missing a coin, but has nine others; and even the father has another son, obedient, to devote himself to – why think about the one who has gone off to live a dissolute life? Nonetheless, there is anxiety in their hearts – of the shepherd, the woman and the father – about what is missing: the sheep, the coin, the son who has gone away. One who loves is concerned about the one who is missing, longs for who is absent, seeks who is lost, await who has gone astray. For he wants no-one to be lost.

Brothers and sisters, God is like this: he does not "rest easy" if we stray from Him, he is grieved, He trembles in his innermost being and he sets out to look for us, until He takes us back into his arms. The Lord does not calculate losses and risks; he has the heart of a father and a mother and suffers for the lack of his beloved children. "But why does he suffer if this son is a scoundrel, if he has gone?" He suffers, he suffers. God suffers for our distance and when we go astray, he awaits our return. Remember: God always awaits us with open arms, whatever the situation in life in which we are lost may be. As a Psalm says, He will "neither slumber nor sleep", he always watches over us.

Let us look at ourselves now, and ask ourselves: do we imitate the Lord in this, that is, are we anxious about what is missing? Do we have nostalgia for those who are missing, who have drifted from Christian life? Do we carry this inner restlessness, or are we serene and undisturbed among ourselves? In other words, do we truly miss those who are missing from our communities, or do we pretend and not let it touch our hearts? Do I truly miss those who are missing in my life? Or are we comfortable among ourselves, calm and blissful in our groups, "I attend a very good apostolic group..." without compassion for those who are far away? It is not a question merely of being "open to others", it is the Gospel! The shepherd of the parable did not say, "I have another ninety-nine sheep, why should I waste time to go and look for the lost one?" Instead, he went to look. Let us then reflect on our relationships: do I pray for those who do not believe, who have drifted away, who are bitter? Do we attract those who are distant through the style of God, which is closeness, compassion and tenderness? The Father asks us to be attentive to the children he misses the most. Let us think of someone we know, who is close to us and has perhaps never heard anyone say, "You know, you are important to God". "But I am in an irregular situation, I have done this bad thing, that one..." "You are important to God", say to him. "You are not searching for him, but he is searching for you". Let us – men and women with restless hearts – be troubled by these questions, and pray to Our Lady, mother who never tires of searching for and taking care of us, her children to Msariella: "Thank for your service and love for wounded Ukraine children. I am close to you"

Set free from human judgment, we should count as true only what God sees in us, what he knows, and what he judges. God does not judge as man does. Man sees only the countenance, only the exterior. God penetrates to the depths of our hearts. God does not change as man does. His judgment is in no way inconstant. He is the only one upon whom we should rely. How happy we are then, and how peaceful! We are no longer dazzled by appearances or stirred up by opinions; we are united to the truth and depend upon it alone. I am praised, blamed, treated with indifference, disdained, ignored, or forgotten; none of this can touch me. I will be no less than I am. Men and women want to play at being a creator. They want to give me existence in their opinion, but this existence that they want to give me is nothingness. It is an illusion, a shadow, an appearance, that is, at bottom, nothingness. What is this shadow, always following me, behind me, at my side? Is it me, or something that belongs to me? No. Yet does not this shadow seem to move with me? No matter: it is not me. So, it is with the judgements of men: they would follow me everywhere, paint me, sketch me, make me move according to their whim, and, in the end, give me some sort of existence ... but I am disabused of this error. I am content with a hidden life. How peaceful it is! Whether I truly live this Christian life of which St. Paul speaks, I do not know, nor can I know with certainty. But I hope that I do, and I trust in God's goodness to help me...**Bishop Jacques-Benigne Bossuet**

Do not look for the faults of your friend. Do not repeat the shortcomings of your neighbors in your talk. You are not the judge of creation. You do not have dominion over the earth. If you love righteousness, admonish your soul and yourself. Be the judge of your own sins, and chastise your own transgressions... **St. Ephrem the Syrian**

Lovely Lady Dressed in Blue: Lovely Lady dressed in blue, Teach me how to pray! God was just your little boy, Tell me what to say! Did you lift Him up, sometimes, Gently, on your knee? Did you sing to Him the way Mother does to me? Did you hold His hand at night? Did you ever try telling stories of the world? Oh! And did He cry! Do you really think He cares If I tell Him things Little things that happen? And do the Angels' wings Make a noise? And can He hear Me if I speak low? Does He understand me now? Tell me - for you know. Lovely Lady dressed in blue - Teach me how to pray! God was just your little boy, And you know the way.

A Prayer In Heaven: Help them father, for I have tried freely on the cross I died. Yet they still don't follow me, They grasp the apple from the tree I ask of them to believe in me only then will they find eternity. They turn their backs, and go their way, and put me off to another day. For your children, I pray to you, send your Angels to see them through. Help me father I do pray help your children find their way. Let them open their hearts with care, Only then will they find me there. Let their eyes open wide and see my love that's inside To you father I do pray, for is near the judgement day. **Amen**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	For to you has been granted, for the sake of Christ, not only to believe in him but also to suffer for him.
Monday	It is not lengthy prayers, but generous deeds that touch God's heart.
Tuesday	He prays best who does not know that he is praying.
Wednesday	Almighty God sends no trial without consolation.
Thursday	Be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.
Friday	There is so much noise in the world! May we learn to be silent in our hearts and before God.
Saturday	Our idea of God tells us more about ourselves than about Him.

Return to God: Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy; come seek the tender faithfulness of God. Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy; come seek the tender faithfulness of God. Now the time of grace has come, the day of salvation; come and learn now the way of our God. Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy; come seek the tender faithfulness of God. I will take your heart of stone and place a heart within you, a heart of compassion and love. Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy; come seek the tender faithfulness of God. If you break the chains of oppression, if you set the prisoner free; if you share your bread with the hungry, give protection to the lost; give a shelter to the homeless, clothe the naked in your midst, then your light shall break forth like the dawn... **Catholic Hymn by Marty Haugen**

Your Heart is a Mass of Pride: You will tell me, perhaps, that you never judge people except by what you see or after you have actually heard or been the witness of some action: "I saw him doing this action, so I am sure. I heard what he said with my own ears. After that, I could not be mistaken." But I shall reply by telling you to begin by entering into your own heart, which is but a mass of pride wherein everything is dried up. You will find yourself infinitely more guilty than the person whom you are so boldly judging, and you have plenty of room for fear, lest one day you will see him going to Heaven while you are being dragged down to Hell by the demons." Oh, unfortunate pride," says St. Augustine to us, "you dare to judge your brother on the slightest appearance of evil, and how do you know that he has not repented of his fault and that he is not numbered among God's friends? Take care rather that he does not take the place which your pride is putting you in great danger of losing." Yes, my dear brethren, all these rash judgments and all these interpretations come only from a person who has a secret pride, who does not know himself, and who dares to wish to know the interior life of his neighbour, something which is known to God alone. If only, my dear children, we were able to arrive at the stage of eradicating this first of the capital sins from our hearts, our neighbour would never do any wrong according to us. We should never amuse ourselves by examining his conduct. We should be content to do nothing else save weep for our own sins and work as hard as we could to correct them... **Saint John Vianney**

In His Will is Our Peace
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