

Trinity IX

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St. Joseph Parish

Fr. Plimpton

Human beings who have ventured far and wide into sinning should not lose hope or say, “I am too stuck in my old sins to change” or “God would not want me in His church or coming home to Him”. They have forgotten or fearfully doubted that there is a place for them before the Cross.

Fulton Sheen said: “God will take anyone who is willing to love” and, we should add.. anyone who is willing to be loved. (Thank you Nat King Cole!) And being willing to love not with a an occasional gesture but with a “passionless passion”, a “wild tranquility”... A love.. heavenly freed.

A sinner who is not repentant cannot love God, any more than someone on parched land can swim; but as soon as a man or woman take his or her squandered energies to God and ask for God to give them the direction He wills, “he will become happy, as he was never happy before.

It is not the wrong or evil things one has already done that keep one from God; it is persistence in that wrong.”

There is a resemblance between this broad view and the kind of the picture we see in our mind’s eye of the younger son. He is clearly not happy at the end of pursuing his own passions and pleasures so persistently; he eventually runs out of personal resources to sustain them. We apprehend an empty human being in foreign territory whose life has become unrecognizable. The grunting pigs are his only companions now when before he enjoyed the mirth and mayhem of his father’s household. Only the son who is recalling his father’s house knows that he is a lost son before God brings him the moment to come to himself.

Did you notice in the gospel story that the father not only comes out to meet him, but that the younger son has no chance to get the words out even to ask for forgiveness. Punishment does not follow from the hands that embraced the son, but a party.. an earthly banquet with all the stops pulled out. It's done. We hope Judgment Day is like that.

We all look to the Rembrandt painting at the top of the stairs for a reason: we want to see ourselves and our hopes enfolded. It depicts our need to be loved and the Father's passion to love us despite ourselves..as demonstrated perfectly from the Cross, in the resurrection of Jesus, by sending the Holy Ghost to be our Comforter now}.. I hope Judgement Day is like that... we the returning sons and daughters being embraced under the glowing face of Father.

Many of us are prudently spending time now looking back at our life histories, or the paths we have taken through life. We have grown enough in faith that we tend to take stock of our successes now as gifts of grace; we are less quick to judge as we come closer to the Judgment seat; less prodigal with time, money, and talent. We see the wreckage and the voids from all our prodigality stretching back to our beginnings and occasionally the wrecks we've made of other's lives. We have spent lavishly of our resources at times, we have expended our energies on projects and relationships that could never have borne fruit, and we have withheld what ought to have been given in a time of another's need..a need we all share.. to be loved.. as this father loved his son.

Maybe we have ended up in the bottom of the bottle; perhaps we have wished or idled away time when we could have consciously walked with God. It could be we have run away from true love for a shiny one. Hopefully,

we have then come to ourselves.. come back up the stairs of our house to seek a spouse's forgiveness. And after all that, a date night follows.

But the Hand that brought us to sanity and sobriety or guided us home, pulled us away from so many cliff edges to solid ground, or literally snatched us from the jaws of death in ignorance as well as conflict, has never been withdrawn. The Holy Persons have repeatedly rescued us from the impossible fixes we've got into ..over and over since adolescence and the impossible fixes we're blindly planning to get into. In that He gave and has also has raised Jesus for us to seek new lives, God has been beyond generous. In fact he has been extravagant with all his graces, most of which we cannot see, and his countless mercies have brought us to this moment of joyful recalling.

God has been persistent in his expenditures, none more ongoing than in giving us His Son in the Incarnation and sustaining the power of the Cross in each of our lives. He has spent His energies in sending the lights of inklings and inspirations, in keeping the stars burning, in holding His creation back from the brink of destruction, and in His victory over Evil, even though He is still pursuing the rear guard of the Devil's demons who try and snatch His precious humanity from Him.

And He has been doing this since Creation for His Creatures, with no let up of Providence, no turning off the spigot of Grace, nor turning of His back to us. God does not run out of anything made by His Love. To Him, He has no expenses for mercy here and righteousness there, He never needs to come to Himself. He's just being Himself and..He wants us all to Himself for He spent Himself for us.

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