

Administrator's Column

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

First, I would like to thank all of you for the wonderful welcome you have shown me upon my arrival at Our Lady of Mercy. I am truly honored to be here with you and I thank God for the blessing of being able to serve you. This weekend, I have the opportunity to preach at all the Masses, and each Mass will be live-streamed.

The topic of my homily - which was the message of the Gospel - is, as I mentioned, very near and dear to my heart and something I struggled with for years - forgiveness. In addition to the personal experiences that I shared with all of you, there is also a book on this topic that I read every year – *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henry Nouwen, one of my favorite authors.

Born in Nijkerk, Holland, on January 24, 1932, Nouwen felt called to the priesthood at a very young age. He was ordained in 1957 as a diocesan priest and studied psychology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. In 1964, he moved to the United States to study. He went on to teach at the University of Notre Dame and the Divinity Schools of Yale and Harvard. In the early 1980's, he lived with the poor in Peru. In 1985, he was called to join L'Arche in Trosly, France, the first of over 100 communities founded by Jean Vanier where people with developmental disabilities live with assistants. He died suddenly on September 21, 1996 in Holland.

Nouwen's book shares his reflections on the beautiful Rembrandt painting which illustrates the famous Parable of the Prodigal Son in the Gospel of Luke. He describes the painting and how we can identify with each of the characters – the forgiving father, the repentant son who was lost but is now home again, and the judgmental older brother.

Nouwen believed that what is most personal is most universal; he wrote, "By giving words to these intimate experiences I can make my life available to others." These are the experiences that I was blessed to share with all of you this weekend as my parish family Experiences that, although painful, lead to blessings from God and my ability to forgive more freely.

In the very near future, I will present a talk on the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the painting by Rembrandt. I hope you can join me. Let us pray for each other as we continue our journey of faith together. May God continue to bless you always. With love and appreciation for each of you,

F. Father Vincent