

The Prodigal Son

My dear friends in Christ,

A friend of mine once asked me, “Fr. Anthony, what do you think God might be running out of in his dealings with us?” There are many obvious answers to this question. I hear some people say that God is running out of patience with them. One could add that God must be running out of graces to share with us, or He is running out mercy, love and kindness. Naturally speaking, these answers are not out of place given that as human beings, we are all broken in different ways and tend to be faithful to sin.

Today’s parable of the Prodigal Son changes any misconception that God might be running out of favors to share with us, especially His mercy. This parable points us in the direction of God’s mercy. It was this direction that led the prodigal son home to a merciful embrace. It was a movement of conversion voiced by the prodigal son when he said: “I shall get up and go to my father, and I shall say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.”

At the end of the parable we are pervaded by the spirit of unrestrained joy that finds expression in a banquet: “Now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.”

In this account the older brother believes his father to be unjust, and he resents this. He has been faithful and observant; he has never neglected the smallest duty; he has been constantly at his father’s side and has been scrupulous in helping him in his work. By thus giving us a picture of the elder brother as well as of the younger, the parable brings out the full character of God’s mercy. He relies lovingly on the person who is faithful to him, but he cannot therefore be insensible of the person who strays, repents, and returns. Rather, his inner feelings burst forth and show us the infinite love God has for anyone who takes a single step towards him. God not only waits hopefully for this step but even tries to get people to it. Such is the full depth of God’s tender love and mercy for the sinner.

Jesus is waiting for you to come home to his merciful embrace.

--Fr. Anthony Ahamefule