

Saturday 11th March 2023.

2nd Week of Lent – Cycle ‘A’

1st Reading = Micah 7:14-15;18-20

Resp. Psalm = Ps 103:1-4;9-12

Gospel = Luke 15:1-3;11-32

As we would have noticed, and as tradition has laid, the parable Jesus tells us today is called the parable of the Prodigal Son. Amongst the many, let us consider three figures in the story. Firstly, the younger son represented the sinner and outcast; secondly, the older son who stood for the Pharisees; and thirdly, the father who represents God. Once again, Jesus flips the table on the religious leaders, and this is how His message came across. But why did He do so? The society in His era was a hostile one; they had created an honor-shame environment where the social game was personal critique and ad hominem attacks and where the most important reward was one's reputation. Time and again, we would see the Pharisees complain about Jesus's ministry among sinners; and this was purposefully done because of that culture and whose result for them was to raise their reputations at the cost of Jesus'. So, they tried to bring Jesus' reputation down not raise theirs. This played out between the older and younger son; the younger son sinned to the extent he wasted away, even making himself unacceptable by serving pigs. The older son claimed consistent loyalty to the father and his commands, unlike his younger brother. Thus, he strove to protect his reputation by bringing forth the idea of his loyalty rather than his younger brother who went as far as wasting everything. But are all not guilty in one way or another? This reminds us of what we call Capital or the Seven Deadly Sins. It would seem they wet against all seven Capitals sins. I found this very interesting and couldn't help but share this with you; it's a reflection from Clyde A. Bonar on this parable, showing how, not only these two sons, but we too, could be involved in this.

First is Pride. Parents in the past relied on their children to care for them in their old age. It was a son's duty (Sir. 3:12). But the younger son gives no hint of promise to take care of his father when old. What is important is his share of inheritance. This is a sin of pride which is inordinate self-centeredness, arrogance combined with egotism and a clamor of self-will.

Second is Avarice. The younger son wastes what his father worked so hard to accumulate. Wasting of possessions and hoarding of possessions are two evils of avarice. We also fall under the sin of avarice because we love to have things and we love to have them just for the sake of having.

Third is Envy. The elder son might also have taken note of Sirach 30:24 which tells us that jealousy and anger shorten life! But is he jealous because his father is fussing over his younger brother or because he wishes he has been the one who has the fun of squandering the money and cavorting with prostitutes?

Fourth is Wrath or Anger. The elder son's words: "this son of yours" shows his anger and he throws it into his father's face with self-centered pouting. He will have to have revenge and not a party. He is full of anger and even us, how quick we are to get angry.

Fifth is Lust. In verse 30, the elder son accuses his younger brother of ravaging their father's property with prostitutes. In lusting we want to gratify a craving for sexual pleasure, and this is what the younger son is doing.

Sixth is Gluttony. Gluttony indicates a much greater interest in food. Isaac of Nineveh taught that when the stomach is hungry, shameful thoughts cannot enter the soul. We should eat only when we are hungry, and it is better for the spiritual life to stop eating while still a little hungry. We would expect gluttony from the younger son, for gluttony and lust go together.

Seventh is Sloth or indolence. The younger son complains that "no one gave him anything." Why is he waiting around for someone to give him something? This is a sin of sloth that is: dejection, sluggishness of mind and feeling and spirit. He has no desire to make any fundamental change in the way he lives his life.

After going through them, we realise that the younger son committed five (pride, avarice, lust, gluttony, and sloth) of the seven deadly sins; the elder son concludes the list with the remaining two (envy, wrath and even pride too). But very striking is the fact that the father says: "I still love you." to each son, because he loves them all. The season of Lent offers us the time to reflect on ourselves; the things we do and how we react when others err. May St Constantine of Carthage, St Alberta of Agen and St Alexius U Se-Yong intercede for us, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

A Great weekend And Fruitful Season of Lent.

Fr Kevin. N. Lereh, m.ss.cc

Together in prayer.