

REFLECTION

By **Melissa Cedillo**, Loretto Volunteers



"...his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him". - Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is one of the most well-known Gospel stories. The popularity of this passage highlights our world's universal need for fairness. When we follow the rules, we expect others to do the same. Thus, if someone doesn't follow the rules and still receives positive recognition, we can become upset. However, like most Bible passages, this parable does not validate our human frustrations. Instead, it focuses on the object of our disapproval: the Prodigal Son.

God does not wait for us to turn in a final product, or expect us to look back at our checklist and point to the ways we have correctly followed the guidelines. Instead, God hopes that we desire a relationship. That when we stumble or stray, we have the humility to pause and ask for support. We must desire relationship, not praise. In fact, we are to praise through our works, through our thoughts, and through our actions.

"He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him." Our hesitancy to ask for help may be rooted in a false belief that we can do it alone; therefore, when we receive help, we can become embarrassed at our inadequacy. Therefore, we must re-root ourselves in the true belief that we cannot go through this world alone - without our God. This is a lesson we know, but still need to learn time and time again.

It is suiting that this reading comes towards the end of Lent as a reminder that our fasting or abstaining is not for reward, but for relationship. It prepares us for Easter. "I have sinned against heaven and you." Our sins are not just our own - they are communal; as are our triumphs. When we seek justice and we fight for social justice we are doing it not just for the immediate other, but as a way to praise something bigger.

PRAYER

May I call on God the same way I am quick to call my best friend with new and exciting news. May I desire upon God the same way one desires their parents when they are feeling sick or helpless. May I ask God for comfort the same way I ask for a loved one's embrace during times of stress and loneliness.

May I choose partnership over independence. May I long for guidance and accept fault.

May I celebrate life with the Creator of life.

Focus: SPIRITUALITY

The season of Lent aligns with the halfway mark of my service year. Service years can be tricky. It is the first time I have been out of school and also have a commitment that is only a year long. It is the constant balance of being present and planning for the next year. It is easy to try and take a break from my relationship with my faith because I am trying to prepare for what is next. It is comfortable to make my to-do list and then pray about it to God. It is a struggle to acknowledge when I have put my faith on hold to figure it all out myself.

"You are here with me always; everything I have is yours," the father explains to his angry son. Everything we do is to be shared in faith with whom we pray to. It is not easy, especially for someone like me who prides herself on her independence. Still, I am humbled by the image of my aunt, someone who is fiercely independent yet does not hesitate to share every piece of her life with God. She reminds me to not compartmentalize. She does not carefully select what she is going to share with her Creator. Why would she? Instead, she freely speaks aloud to God; explaining her day, inviting the Spirit so effortlessly. She knows she does not have to do it alone because faith is about living in relationship with God. Everything she has is not for her own. She reminds me to share my life with God authentically. The mundane, the future, and the present; she shares it with God so easily and beautifully.

WHO INSPIRES YOU TO SERVE?

My aunt does not wait to invite God into her life. Their relationship is overflowing with love and with communication. They plan and observe her life together, the love between them glistens. Their friendship reminds me to converse with God more frequently. This example of relationship is one I hope to replicate during the rest of my service year. In the Season of Lent, she reminds me to speak to God naturally. Most of all, as Easter approaches this Parable reminds me it is not about obtaining the perfect relationship, but one that is unconditional and full of Grace.