

A Reflection from Fr. Canisius for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

Dear Parishioners,

Imagine how today's Gospel parable might translate into our modern world. The younger son approaches his father, who is very much alive, with a request: "Father, could I have my share of the estate, please?" At first glance, this may seem a bit rude and demanding. It could easily provoke a response like, "Not a chance!" Moreover, by asking for his share while his father is still alive, he disregards not only his father's wishes but also some deep-rooted traditions. It's as if he's saying, "I want what's mine now!" Ultimately, once he receives his inheritance, he goes on a wild spending spree that contradicts the values in which he was raised. What's even more troubling is that he chooses to do this far from home, squandering his fortune solely on himself and leaving his family behind. It's heartbreakingly akin to saying, "You're no longer part of my life!"

However, that's not quite the case! You see, this is one of the most compassionate fathers we meet in Scripture. This parable isn't solely about our human shortcomings; it's also a beautiful illustration of God's extraordinary justice and mercy. Each day, as we navigate our lives, we might stumble in ways that a skilled novelist would emphasize to help us develop our character. Yet, God our Father celebrates every moment we recognize our missteps and choose to return to Him.

We can indeed be grateful that He offers us not merely what we deserve but instead what He lovingly wishes to give. Rather than casting us aside, He gently restores us. This brings comfort, especially since we all experience moments when we miss that field goal, get sidetracked, or find ourselves in a bit of trouble. It's part of being human, and it's something we can all connect with.

If we find ourselves faltering due to our choices, we can gently seek grace to regain our clarity, much like the younger son. With sincere hearts, we can move toward our loving Father, saying, "I have sinned against heaven and against you." We can take solace in knowing He will embrace us with joy and gratitude.

As we journey through the remaining weeks of Lent, let us strive to embody the spirit of the younger son when we need to return, and the heart of the father as we extend forgiveness to one another. Together, we can seek the grace to let this kindness flow, and we are thankful that we are surrounded by our Father's boundless, loving mercy and fairness.

God be with you in the week ahead!

~ Fr. Canisius