

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Sep 11th 2016

Twenty-fourth Sunday ordinary time.

Ex 32:7-11, 13-14 / Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19 / 1Tim 1:12-17 / Lk 15:1-32

How is God? What can we say about him? We can imagine, we can talk, we can try to explain, but our words are not enough. The safest way to learn how God is is by listening to Jesus. The proclaimed Gospel has shown us three parables, all of them related to God. On this Sunday Jesus Christ told us that God is close to us; God is not like a king or a judge; God is a Father, an unbelievably good and lovely Father. The main parable we have proclaimed, has often been called the prodigal son's parable, but it is more accurate to call it the good Father's parable.

When the youngest son asks his father: 'Father, give me my share of the property now' somehow he is saying that it is death. He is looking for freedom, he wants to start his own way far away from his father. In our modern society is not something similar happening? Many people are living far away from God. As happens in the parable, nowadays the Father keeps his silence.

The youngest son easily starts a life of excesses. The original term refers to an unhealthy chaotic life, without any order, and it is not only referring to a moral order. After a short while, the real drama starts. The youngest son is hungry and notices an internal vacuum; he wants bread and

also love. The first sign that can help us to be conscious that we are far away from God is often when we are hungry for love and we notice an internal vacuum. It is time to start the way back home. We have plenty of everything but we lack something; what can fulfil our heart? We should enter inside, as the young man does, to remember and rediscover the lovely face of our father God. That Father who every day is looking through the windows waiting for when we arrive home. He is waiting to hold us in his arms and kiss us. Maybe we can recognize ourselves in this young son each time that we get far away from God. Other times we can be the older son. But this loving Father meets the elder brother also. He speaks to him with the same affection and invites him to the party.

What is Jesus Christ suggesting with this parable? Is it possible that God is like that? Is he this lovely Father seeking a blessed life for all his sons, for those who are near and for those who have gone far away? Probably this parable is the best metaphor for us to realise how God is with each of us. This parable invites us to believe, even more than ever, that in God we can find an endless love and forgiveness.

A final invitation. There is a famous picture, Rembrandt's "Return of the Prodigal Son" that expresses this Gospel very well; contemplating this image can help us to enter in this Holy Word.

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