

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT BE RECONCILED TO GOD

God promised the Israelites that He would take them to the promised land. Today we hear that they have reached it and settled down. The Lord told Joshua that He had fulfilled His promise, and He had removed the reproach of Egypt from them. They celebrated the Passover; the event that marked their liberation from slavery. They started a new life by eating the fruit of the land.

We were like the Israelites who lived in slavery, due to our sins, and God sent His Son to redeem us. Through our baptism, we have become a new creation, as St. Paul tells us in the second reading. It is God who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ. He did not count our trespasses against us. As St. Paul appealed to the Corinthians to reconcile to God, so we are to do the same.

The story of the prodigal son tells us the infinite love of God, and what happens to us when, we leave His presence by sinning. It is also a message to us that God has given us our freedom to choose what we want, and will not dictate to us what to do. "He Himself made human beings in the beginning, and then left them free to make their own decisions. If you choose, you will keep the commandments and so be faithful to His will. He has set fire and water before you; put out your hand to whichever you prefer...He has not commanded anyone to be wicked, and He has not given anyone permission to sin," (Sirach 15:14-16,20).

This can be seen in the life of the younger son. He was not mature enough to live an independent life, but the father did not argue with him when he demanded the share of his property. When he wanted his freedom, he was allowed to have it. But that freedom made him lose everything and he began to live like the swine, because he ate the food for the swine. This is what happens to us when we love sinning more than doing what is good. God does not, and will not argue with us when we want to do what we want. However, when we realize our mistakes and we come back, He will not reject us. In His eyes, we are not slaves but sons, because His Son has reconciled us to Himself. We are no more slaves or aliens. So "we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God". The son was rehearsing what to say to his father but when he came home

the father did not even hear what he was saying. He was happy the son was back. The father made him a king; he became a new creation. That is what God wants to make us. He wants to put us on His shoulders and carry us home, like the lost sheep, (Lk.15:4-7).

The Israelites ate the Passover with joy. In a similar way, the father had a feast for the younger son when he returned. We have a banquet of eternal life prepared for us always - the Body and Blood of Jesus. We are to reconcile to God to enable us to participate with a clean heart and receive the graces God the Father has in store for us.

Many of us are not reconciling to God because our attitudes are like the Pharisees and the older son. We think we are better off than anybody else. That attitude is pride and vainglory. We are yet to admit our own weaknesses and sins.

This parable is a good lesson also for many of the youth of today who want to be left alone to do whatever they want. Life became unbearable for the younger son because at first he thought life was all about pleasure, joy and happiness. Later he realized that it was more than that. The question one may ask is that, 'where were his friends he spent his resources with, when things became hard for him?' They all left him. Your friends will leave you in times of difficulties, but if you reconcile with the Lord, He will never leave you. You will always be a child in His eyes.