

4th Sunday of Lent
March 27, 2022
“Recognizing Our Own Dire Need”

Jos 5:9...12
II Cor 5:17-21
Lk 15:1...32

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Most of us in our highly developed Western World have a difficult time seeing ourselves for who we really are. Our lives are so very busy. We are involved with so many different projects and activities. There never seems to be time for self-analysis or personal reflection.

Consequently, we can be seriously lacking in some area of our personal growth and development – And, yet, never come to recognize it. Even when others might call the issue to our attention – we often dismiss what they say without a second thought.

Often, it is only when our life is seriously disrupted, that we realize that we are in dire need. We have a serious problem – we recognize it – and we know that we need outside help to make things better or right!

The Gospel selection from St. Luke gives us a real insight into this very human problem. The tax collectors and prostitutes knew they had serious problems. The tax collectors survived by having sold out to the Roman authorities. The prostitutes survived by selling themselves. Both groups were in desperate, and almost hopeless, situations.

However, there was another group who didn't even recognize that they had a problem. These were the Pharisees and the scribes. They lived comfortable lives. They went to the synagogue and to the Temple. People paid them marks of honor and respect. But they were self-righteous. Moreover, they were spiritually blind – They didn't recognize that they, too, were in dire need. Their souls were in jeopardy. They deluded themselves into thinking they were not like the tax collectors and prostitutes. Yet, they were, perhaps, far worse off – Because they were blind, hardhearted, and resistant to the one that God had sent!

Probably, there are many of us who can identify with the younger son in the parable of Jesus. In bygone days, we made many mistakes. We sinned in any number of ways. We squandered God's grace, our talents, and our gifts. Even now, we might feel that we are hopelessly lost and beyond salvation.

On the other hand, there might be many of us who never made a mess of our lives. We were always confident and sure of ourselves. We did everything “by the book”. Presently, we enjoy success and are respected by others.

However, we can also be blind to our own sinfulness and dire need. Moreover, our blindness can become evident in the hardhearted attitude we have toward others around us. These include, but are not limited to, the addicted, the homeless, those who have served prison terms, those with eating disorders, those of a different color, a particular race, or another religious persuasion!

The unfortunate mistake that we all make is that we forget that God loves us all. We are all the Father's children. And the Father seeks his lost sons and daughters every day. Furthermore, He runs to meet us whenever He sees that we are returning!

But neither does the Father forget the other son who never left. He seeks out the self-righteous and hardhearted son. He reminds him of how blessed he really is. And then, all but commands him to expand his heart – to love his brother for who he really is – a beloved child of God!

Today, St. Paul teaches us that if we are joined to Christ, then we are a whole new creation. Our past is blotted out – our sins are eradicated! The Son has taken upon himself our humanity in the person of Jesus. And Jesus gave up his life to bring us to divine life – which is the new creation that we possess.

However, our new life comes with many obligations. We become ambassadors of Christ himself. We must make his presence known and felt – wherever we are, and with whomever we meet. We must behave as Jesus behaved in the Gospel of Luke. He was kind to the tax collectors and to the prostitutes – But he was also patient with and kind to the Pharisees and the scribes. Nevertheless, in every case he hoped for a change of heart and repentance.

Of course, being kind does not mean that we ever condone sin or “whitewash” the evil in people's lives. But it does mean that we see them as God's children. God loves them all, and He hopes for the ultimate return of every one of them.

Finally, Brothers and Sisters, we must never forget that we are on a journey. God will continue to reveal more to us that must be changed in our hearts and in our lives. This can occur at any time – And we must be grateful that God never forgets about us.

And so, for this moment, let us pray for openness to all that God would have us see and learn about ourselves. And may we strive to be true brothers and sisters of Jesus in all that we do every day!

Amen.

March 27, 2022

Msgr. Russell G. Terra