

## **24TH SUNDAY ORD. (C)** **I WILL RISE AND GO TO MY FATHER**

The Lord God is full of mercy and compassion. This is made known in all the three readings we just heard. The first reading tells us about the sin of the people of Israel. "When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down the mountain, they gathered around Aaron, and said to him, 'Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him,'" (Ex 32:1). Aaron also obeyed and did what they requested, thus they sinned against God.

The people became impatient with Moses, and God was angry with them, but Moses intervened and God did not punish them. Moses at that time seemed to be wiser than God, and was advising God of what to do, and reminding Him of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That is not the case; rather it shows the mercy and compassion of God, and how He listens to the righteous and ready to forgive the repentant sinner.

St. Paul told Timothy the truth about the coming of Jesus into the world that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". He recounted what he had done and had been before; he was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and arrogant, but was mercifully treated by Christ. Even after his conversion, he considered himself as the worst of sinners.

The three parables Jesus told, clearly indicate how merciful and compassionate God is. If the shepherd could leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness to look for the lost one, then it means each sheep was important to him. In the same way the lost coin as important for the woman as those in her purse at that time. The father did not allow his son to speak when he returned, but with joy, he made him a 'king' by giving him the best of clothes, and throwing a party for him.

When the son lost everything including the friends he enjoyed life with, he decided to go back to his father. He said, "I shall arise and go to my father and I shall say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and

against you”’. Like St. Paul, he felt he did not deserve to be a son, but a slave or servant. He put aside his shame and went back with humility.

When we sin, we turn away from God and we leave home where every good thing is found. We want our freedom like the younger son. His life tells us that when we move away from God, nothing will bring us lasting peace and happiness. Immature freedom and ignorance can lead to self-destruction.

At certain times too, we behave like the Scribes and the Pharisees, and the older son. Jesus told the parables because the Scribes and Pharisees were complaining about the tax collectors and sinners who were drawing near to Jesus to listen to Him. The older son also did not consider the younger as a brother, but the son of his father. That can be described as selfishness, arrogance and hatred. We do not even know the graces we receive by being faithful to God. The tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to the one who came to save them. What about us?

The Lord is at the door looking out to see whether I am coming back to Him. St. Paul is reminding me that he was the worst of sinners, but he had received mercy so that “Christ Jesus might display all His patience as an example for those who would come to believe in Him for everlasting life”. God does not consider the gravity of our sins nor the number of times we have sinned; He looks for a contrite heart and a humble spirit. Let the prayer of David be our prayer every day: “A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me”.