

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT HOMILY YEAR C

1. gospel parable is story of a rather typical dysfunctional family
 - a. Younger son who is really a spoiled brat
 - i. Has nerve to demand inheritance from father in advance
 - ii. Goes to foreign lands and blows it on parties
 - iii. the party ends because of a depression, stuck with feeding the pigs
 - iv. sounds almost devious: father treats servants better than this
 - v. I will go back and beg to be treated as a servant
 - b. Older son seems rather obsessive whiner
 - i. father has given the younger son his share of inheritance, the rest belongs to him
 - ii. Is he willing to enjoy his inheritance and find meaning in his work?
 - iii. What does he do when his long lost brother comes home
 - iv. He complains to his father, you never threw a party for me
 - c. father who is overindulgent
 - d. Unusual that the father gives into his son and give him inheritance before he has died
 - i. Does not seem able to get angry with his children
 - ii. When the son comes slinking back, he welcomes him back and gives a great party
 - iii. The older son comes complaining, father says all I have is yours, begging the son to come in.
2. Easy to see ourselves in this story especially like the younger son
 - a. We waste the gifts God gives us
 - b. gifts might be material property, or our talents or even the spiritual heritage given to us from childhood
 - c. we decide we know better than our teachers and guides what we want
 - d. when life gets tough because of our mistakes, we sometimes come slinking back to God; depend on God forgiving us
3. Recognizing ourselves in the older son is less comfortable
 - a. He represents the biggest challenge for those who faithfully practice their faith
 - b. Easily lose the sense of joy in being with God
 - c. Rather than see the mystery and wonder of the rituals of faith, we start looking at them as burdens
 - d. We become tempted to compare ourselves with sinners
 - e. Here we are carrying the burdens of faith while the sinners are off partying
 - f. Can become difficult to forgive the younger son and especially the Father for being so indulgent
4. Interesting that the story ends with the Father begging the elder son to come in
 - a. We are not told whether he goes into the celebration or leaves with a grudge
 - b. The risk is that he will leave like the younger son had done formerly
 - c. He easily becomes the one he resents
5. Story has a lot of irony
 - a. The more pride we take in our own holiness and goodness is another way of being like the younger son
 - b. Pride builds resentment and rejection of God and will lead to our own destruction
 - c. More we recognize ourselves as being like the younger son, the more joy we will be open to
 - d. God is waiting to welcome us back into his family
 - e. Do not even have to confess our sins perfectly
 - f. Simply the willingness to experience God's love and forgiveness will bring us into the new creation of God's love
 - g. We will see the world with a new vision, rejoicing that God truly does love us completely.