

Homily
March 30, 2025
4th Sunday of Lent / Laetare Sunday
19:40 – 29:02

A man had two sons.

Every time I hear this wonderful passage, from the Gospel According to Luke. Here's what I hear, "Martin and Ellen Ginther had two sons." And they were completely opposite.

If John said, "Up!" Rick said, "Down!"

If John said, "Go!" Rick said, "Stay!"

If John wanted to go out and play, Rick had his nose buried in a book.

(To Beverly Durham) Does that seem fair? "That's a fair description."

How my parents endured the two of us being so different, I don't know. And we didn't get along. Why? Because we were so different. We saw the world in a completely different way.

The only thing...well, we had two things in common: we were from the same parents, living in the same house, we both had five sisters. (Oy!) And we both liked art. John, the plastic arts – painting, etc. I loved music and singing. That's all we had in common.

I loved it when my brother would tell the truth. Do you know why? Because when he told a lie, my parents believed him. When he told the truth, he got smacked. And of course, I had to stand off to the side, going... (Scoffing Sound) I wasn't always a good brother.

That's what I remember, every time I hear, "A man had two sons..."

One we know is a "prodigal." Basically, prodigal comes from a Latin word, "prodigere," and it means "to waste," or "to be extravagant."

The son wasted everything he had inherited. He lived extravagantly and there was nothing left.

This younger one, he knew his father pretty well. He knew his father was a loving father. Now, it is true that in this particular instance, he **presumed** on that love. So much so, that he could ask his father for his half of the inheritance and the father responded out of love, “Here it is.” And then he went out and squandered it all.

When he came to his senses, you know, being hungry can make you come to your senses; – If you were a Jew, helping to feed swine was absolutely forbidden. You talk about being an outcast among his own. He realized that he needed to go home to his father.

He wasn’t just going home. He was going to his father. And he was willing to be treated like one of the hired hands. But he needed to go to his father.

We know the story. The father receives him with magnificent love. It’s just amazing. His father is actually standing there waiting, looking down the road. And when he sees him, he rejoices and does everything in his culture, which he could do: a robe, a ring and a party. For the son who was as good as dead, was home.

Now the older son didn’t see dad quite the same way. He saw his father, as we heard him say, as a “taskmaster,” one who demanded obedience. And if the son was going to get anywhere, he had to barter his way through things. “I’ll work hard and I’ll get something in return.”

He also had a bad habit. That was to demand retribution, especially upon his younger brother; but also, on his father.

Notice what he does. He won’t go into the house. He makes his father come out. Well, he doesn’t “make” him. He just stays there and his father comes out. Why? Because he loves his older son.

Now the retribution to his father, was that the older son refused to go in, and drew the loving father out. That had to cost a lot, in respect.

And we know what the son does. The older son calls his father a taskmaster. You almost feel like the older son is a slave. The kind of kid who no matter what he does, no matter how good it is, he can't see the love that the father has.

Two sons. Very different.

Have you ever been a prodigal? Have you ever been extravagant and wasteful, and presumed upon love?

I have. Not along the lines of the younger son. I knew there wasn't a lot there and so I knew not to even ask.

Just getting a dollar for school was like... Well, dad had seven kids, a wife, a home, one job. And he would just look at us. It was almost a scowl. We thought it was a horrible thing, that we were going to get chewed-out. And all he was trying to do was to go through the budget for the week, "Was there enough to do this?"

Have you ever presumed upon someone who loves you? Have you returned to seek reconciliation with someone who loves you? Have you stood waiting for someone you love to return? And I recognize this one: Is what you and I do a bargaining with God? --- To gain His love, even though it is there for the receiving?

Something to ponder this week, as we stand in this fourth week of Lent. On this Laetare Sunday. Something to ponder, especially in our relationship with the God, who is truly a loving Father.