

June 28, 2016



Today I want to share another part of my retreat from a week ago. This story is one that Jesus told (often called the Prodigal Son), but as I reflected on it during retreat the story seems to be more about 'The Loving Merciful Father' than about either of the sons. As we have heard the story before, the younger son was wanting his share of the father's inheritance **now**. He doesn't want to wait until his father dies. Sadly, the father gives him his share of the inheritance now, and the younger son goes off and spends all his money in loose living. As you probably recall from the story (Luke 15:11), there is a famine that comes and the young son has to get a job feeding pigs. As he does so, he remembers how much better off he was when was still at home in his father's house; so he decides to return home (this time not as a son, but as a hired hand). Do you recall that while the young son was still a long way away, the Father has been watching for him and runs out to meet him. The Father is so happy to see him coming home, that he decides to have a party for him. How many of our fathers would do this for one of the children who takes his share of the money and leaves home before his father dies? Many fathers would probably have said, 'I tried to warn you.'

Or we might identify with the elder son who remains at home helping his father, but is angry and jealous of his younger brother. He refuses to go into the house to celebrate that his brother has come home. I confess that can easily be me. I think that when Jesus told us this story, he was trying to tell us **what God is like**. Notice, that God is kind, merciful, and compassionate even when we don't deserve it. However in this story, the father goes out to meet the older son when he arrives home from work saying, 'Everything I have is yours. But your brother was... lost and has been found.'

As I have prayed this story before, I've always been able to identify with either the younger son or the older brother at different times in my life. This year I have been asked to recognize that the story is not really about either of the brothers, but more about what God is like. In the dictionary, the word 'prodigal' can also mean *extravagant*. Yes, God our Father is definitely extravagant in his love toward all us.

God bless you!

Sister Marilyn Dunn, PBVM (srmarilyn.dunn@presentation.edu)
Assistant in Student Services & Mission