



Saturday of the 2nd Week of Lent



Date: Saturday, March 22, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C

First Reading: Micah 7:14–15, 18–20

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103:1–4, 9–12 | **Response:** Psalm 103:8a

Gospel Acclamation: Luke 15:18

Gospel Reading: Luke 15:1–3, 11–32

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

The prophecy of Micah concludes with a vision of mercy. The Shepherd of Israel, who led His people from slavery to freedom, is called upon once more to guide them to green pastures. Micah’s prayer breathes confidence: “Who is a God like you, who removes guilt and pardons sin?” (Mi 7:18). The answer is found in the very character of God—a God who does not hold onto anger but delights in showing mercy, who casts our sins into the depths of the sea. This is the mercy that renews, that restores, that rewrites the story of a people who so often lose their way.

And then we hear the psalmist, crying out in exultation: “Bless the Lord, O my soul... who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction” (Ps 103:1-4). This is no reluctant forgiveness, no begrudging clemency. This is the mercy of a Father who, like the father in today’s Gospel, runs to meet the prodigal, embracing him before a single word of apology is spoken.

The parable of the prodigal son is among the most beloved in all of Scripture. It speaks to the heart because it is the story of every soul that has wandered far from home. The younger son demands his inheritance while his father still lives—an insult, a rejection, a severing of ties. And yet, when he is brought low, when he finds himself empty and alone, to the point of starvation, it is the memory of his father’s goodness that draws him back. He prepares his confession and appeal, rehearsing the words, expecting no more than the life of a servant. But he does not even reach the door before his father sees him, runs to him, embraces him, and clothes him once more in the dignity he thought he had lost forever.

The second half of the story is for us. The elder son—resentful, bitter, unwilling to celebrate—has kept all the rules but has never entered into the joy of his father’s love. “All these years I have served you,” he protests. But service without love is slavery. Obedience without relationship is duty without delight. The father, patient and pleading, reminds him: “All that I have is yours.” The real tragedy of the elder son is not that he is outside the feast, but that he has never truly understood what it means to be a son.

Lent is the journey of both brothers. It is the path of repentance for the prodigal who has squandered grace. It is the path of conversion for the elder who has served without joy. And it is, most of all, the revelation of the Father’s heart—a heart that never ceases to call us home.

In our world today, the wounds of division and exclusion run deep. Zambia, like many nations, struggles with inequality—those who feast while others hunger, those who hold power while others are cast aside. The Gospel is not merely a story about personal sin; it is a call to restore justice, to embrace those we have dismissed, to become, like the father, agents of mercy in a broken world.

St. Nicholas Owen, the Jesuit lay brother whose feast falls traditionally near this time, spent his life building hidden places of refuge for persecuted Catholics. He risked everything so that others might find a home, a shelter, a place of grace. He understood the heart of the Father—the one who does not abandon His children, who prepares a place for them, who will not rest until all are gathered in.

And so, as we walk the road of Lent, and we keep Pope Francis in our prayers, let us ask ourselves:

1. In what ways have I distanced myself from the Father’s love—through sin, through fear, through self-reliance?
2. Do I see the dignity of others, especially those I have dismissed or judged unfairly, and am I willing to embrace them as brothers and sisters?
3. How can I embody the mercy of the Father, bringing healing and reconciliation in my own relationships and in the world around me?

The invitation is before us. The feast is prepared. The Father waits. Will we enter into His joy?

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