

## THE HEART OF THE PERFECT FATHER

Today's Gospel from Saint Luke contains what is commonly known as the parable of the prodigal son.

That's not really a good title. The story really isn't so much about the son. It's more about the father, his love, his wisdom, his patience. And it's ultimately about the perfect father, God the Father, and what's in His heart, the heart of the perfect father.

What does a father, any father, do? He loves. He disciplines. He leads. He commands. And God the Father does this perfectly, all from His heart filled with love for each one of us.

So let's look at some of the details of the story Jesus tells about this father with two sons.

The younger son comes to the father and commands the father to give him his share of the father's estate. So he's saying to the father, in so many words, "I wish you were dead, so I could claim my share of your property. But I can't wait for you to die, so give me my share now."

Now the father is very wise and very patient. He knows for sure that his son's lousy attitude is going to lead him down a bad road. He's knows he's going to waste everything the father gives him. And he knows that this will be very painful for him to witness as a father.

When the son decides to return to his father, it's not like he fully realizes how wrong he has been. He's basically motivated to end his starvation. So he memorizes the words he's going to tell his father when he asks for mercy.

The father, though, filled with a loving heart, knows that whatever the depth of his son's repentance might truly be, it's enough to celebrate. It's still a sign of new life in a son who had been spiritually dead. He runs to him, embraces him and kisses him.

Today's Gospel is an invitation for each one of us to go to the Father, to tell the Father, "I'm not sure how much I love you. I'm not sure how truly sorry I am for the life I have been living, for the parts of my life that are not what You want for me."

"But I offer You today, right now, all the love I have for You. I offer you all the sorrow I have for anything about my life that has disappointed You. Help me to know the depth of Your love for me. Help me to love You more, to obey You more, to trust You more."

"I want to know Your perfect will for my life. I ask for the grace I will need to faithfully carry out Your will for me."

"And help me be forever grateful for Your love, Your guidance. For Your Fatherhood. And for creating me as Your child. Amen."