



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller



Mass for Charismatic Renewal March 22, 2014

The New Evangelization is one of the Pastoral Priorities of the Mutually Shared Vision we proclaimed at Pentecost nearly one year ago. This morning's gospel is a perfect illustration of what we are called to do in the spirit of welcoming our brothers and sisters who have wandered away from the Father's love. In the New Evangelization we are called to be ministers of peace, the peace which God offers to those who seek His forgiveness and love.

The story Jesus tells this morning is commonly called "The Prodigal Son", but I find it interesting that Webster's dictionary has two surprisingly different definitions for the word "prodigal". One definition is "Recklessly wasteful" and the other is "Profuse in giving." Certainly the story illustrates the "Recklessly wasteful" younger son, but it also reveals to us the "Profuse and giving" father who joyfully welcomes "the prodigal" home.

Why did it take so long for the "Prodigal Son" to come home? It was likely he was embarrassed for the betrayal of his father's love. He clearly suffered from the choices he made and the life he led. I would expect that he was fearful of what his father would say if he tried to return. Would he be welcomed or punished? Maybe he really did not know or believe in the "Profuse and giving" nature of his father. If he had, maybe he would not have left.

These are the reasons many who drift away from the faith offer for staying away. They are afraid they will be judged by those who are like the older son, faithful to his father all along. They fear they will not be forgiven by God the Father for the life they have lived separated from his will. They stay away because they do not really know or believe in the "Profuse and giving" nature of our Father.

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel" writes, "The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always open." And like the father of the Prodigal Son, we are called to run out to greet them in the spirit of loving fraternity. Just as the

“Prodigal Father” is a sign of God’s eagerness to forgive us, we must also be a sign of our Lord whom the Psalmist proclaims is “Kind and Merciful.”

Consider how deeply the father had been sinned against, disrespected, discarded, and shamed. Yet he kept looking into the timeless distance with the hope of his return. He was not slowed down by his pride or his wounds. He held nothing back. He dresses him in the finest robe...a sign of honor. He gives him a ring...a sign of authority. He places sandals on his feet...a sign of freedom. The shoes were the greatest sign of the complete reconciliation...The son was not to be treated as a slave or servant because he sinned; he was instead, forgiven and fully welcomed into the embrace of the Father with a gentle kiss and a raucous party. What “Profuse giving!” In this moment of reconciliation the Father embodies the words of Micah in this morning’s first reading as he describes our forgiving Lord, “Who does not persist in anger forever, but delights in clemency.”

When our brothers and sisters come home, let us rejoice and share in their reconciliation, not carry a self-righteous grudge, demanding that he or she is only allowed back when they have paid the price. We have been given the blessing of being with God all along, but as the Father tells his older son, “Your brother was dead and has come to life again.”