

## **Homily – Saturday of the Second Week of Lent Pastoral Council Mass – March 2, 2024**

Through our first reading, from the prophet Micah, this second week of Lent the Church already joyfully proclaims the upcoming Easter night, when we sing in the Easter Proclamation: *“O happy fault / that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!”* The people feel like they are once again far from God. The prophet – sent by God – writes a hymn for them, remembering the wonders worked by God in favor of Israel, despite their infidelity. Great mysteries are revealed through the prophet’s heart. God will not bear his wrath and will turn again to pity. The Lord will gather a multitude of peoples. God has reserved a deserted place for Himself, where He Himself will feed His scattered flock, who can trust in Him alone. That is why we live happily, despite seeing ourselves weak before God. It will be He who throws our failures to the bottom of the ocean, for us to begin again. The Lord will restore his covenant of love with our hearts.

From the beginning of the Gospel, we see two groups of people with Jesus. Tax collectors and sinners are drawing near to listen to the Lord. The scribes and Pharisees utter complaints. The evangelist clearly shows us what the attitude of each one is, leading us – from this moment – to understand the meaning of the following parable. Then, Jesus talks about how two sons relate to their father.

One of the younger son's greatest failures is not only that he left home and "squandered his inheritance", but what the text says next: He did it "on a life of dissipation." He lost his life! His father had diligently guarded his life until the moment he decided to irresponsibly separate himself from him. But the separation does not only occur in the physical sense. The elder son was even further away from his father's heart than his brother.

We cannot change external behaviors without changing inner attitudes. It can only be done through God's grace. That is why we take advantage of this Lenten season to take steps from the depths of ourselves towards God's heart. Thus, good works and kind gestures will be what spring from us. May God grant us the grace to heal what in us resembles both the elder son and the younger son. May we become more the image of God the Father, who is always happy when his children return to the paths of happiness He offers them.

Pope Francis has pointed out that God *"forgives all sins but needs us to show Him our sins, with our nakedness. To pray in this way, exposed, with a naked soul, without covering up, without trusting even in what I have learned about the way to pray."*

May Our Lady of Guadalupe help us imitate her humility, so we do not show appearances to God, but only our humbled hearts.