

## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

March 14, 2010      4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent (Cycle C)



### **Gospel reading: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 15:1-3, 11-32**

*[To be read aloud]*

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So to them Jesus addressed this parable: 'A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger...

**(For the complete reading please use your Bible)**

### **Brief commentary:**

In this chapter, Jesus is criticized by the religious leaders who disagree with his association with sinners and tax collectors. This opposition sets the stage for the three parables known as the parables of mercy. These parables are bound together by the joy of finding that which was lost, in this case, sinners and outcasts. The third parable is probably the most famous for its message and its beauty. The story is really about a father whose love for his two sons breaks through all the customs of the time. Under Jewish law the first-born son received a double share of the inheritance (Deut 21:17). The younger son in this story is entitled to only a third which he demands and then leaves. After calamity forces him to return home, he is welcomed by his father with open arms and no regrets, just the joy of having recovered his son. This familiar first part of the story continues with a second event, the anger of the older son. The father also goes out to this son who refuses to enter the house. He affirms the young man's faithfulness, but invites him to join in the joy of the brother who was lost and has been found.

#### Today's reading offers three significant messages:

- God lovingly waits for us even before we decide to return home.
- The older son is reminded that all that the father has is his. Nothing has been taken away from him by welcoming his brother back.
- God's prodigal forgiveness and love extends to all of us in a personal way.

### **For our shared or personal reflection:**

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

1. Am I like the elder or the younger son? Maybe a little of both? Explain.
2. Am I trying to be like the father? Give concrete examples.

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 218-221; 545-546; 589; 733; 1439; 1443; 1468; 1846; 2795; 2839.