

For I demand mercy not sacrifices ~ Hosea 6:6

Confession- combines the Latin "con" with the Greek "homou" to mean aligning with others

Reconciliation – To bring to parties back into union. "Re" comes from the Latin to do again and "concile" comes from the Latin "cilia" which literally means to bring eyelash to eyelash again.

Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32

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.

I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him,

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

I no longer deserve to be called your son;

treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."

So he got up and went back to his father.

While he was still a long way off,

his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion.

He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.

His son said to him,

'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you;

I no longer deserve to be called your son.'

But his father ordered his servants,

'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him;

put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Take the fattened calf and slaughter it.

Then let us celebrate with a feast,

because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again;

he was lost, and has been found.'

Then the celebration began.
Now the older son had been out in the field
and, on his way back, as he neared the house,
he heard the sound of music and dancing.
He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean.
The servant said to him,
'Your brother has returned
and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf
because he has him back safe and sound.'
He became angry,
and when he refused to enter the house,
his father came out and pleaded with him.
He said to his father in reply,
'Look, all these years I served you
and not once did I disobey your orders;
yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends.
But when your son returns
who swallowed up your property with prostitutes,
for him you slaughter the fattened calf.'
He said to him,
'My son, you are here with me always;
everything I have is yours.
But now we must celebrate and rejoice,
because your brother was dead and has come to life again;
he was lost and has been found.'"

Reflection on a friend's life

Breakout questions:

1. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, have you ever been the son who was lost?
Have you ever been the oldest son. How did people respond to your having been lost.
2. How did you respond to others who were lost? Did you feel hurt, abandoned, betrayed.
3. Was the prodigal son looking for reconciliation or was he comfortable with his father just hearing his confession?
4. What lessons can we learn from these Scripture passages, from God's offer of forgiveness that we can apply to family, to our work and other relations??
5. Can you think of other Scripture passages in which an individual or God gives someone undeserved forgiveness which leads to reconciliation?

When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares."

— **Henri Nouwen, Out of Solitude: Three Meditations on the Christian Life**

Bibliography

- 1) The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming by Henri Nouwen
- 2) Searching for and Maintaining Peace by Jacques Phillippe
- 3) 33 Days to Merciful Love: a do-it-yourself Retreat in Preparation for Marian Consecration by Michael Gaitley