

4th Sunday of Lent Cycle C

31 March 2019

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The Sunday of the Second Scrutiny

Last Sunday they were presented with the Creed, which is the synthesis of our faith.

Today is the Sunday of Joy as the colour suggests, the liturgy allows instruments and the decoration of the altar with flowers.

The Passover celebrations are nearer

From the first reading to the Gospel, the readings talk about joy and it is for that reason the first reading opens with the following sentence: *"Today I have removed the reproach of Egypt from you."* The people of Israel were freed or liberated from the slavery of Egypt, they are entering the Promised Land but before entering the land while they were still at Gilgal the Lord spoke to Joshua to perform a certain rite so that they could belong to the chosen people. Joshua was the only one remaining from the people who left Egypt, that means he was the only one circumcised therefore he had to circumcise all male. For more information you can read Joshua 5, 2-9.

The second reading could be considered as the manifestation of the reconciliation of man with God. *Whoever is in Christ is a new creature.* The old things are gone or they have passed away and *behold new things have come.* It is not an easy thing to measure the profundity of this affirmation because what comes into our mind is the renovation of a structure. Paul here talks about a new creature, that is, a new act of creation.

The Gospel passage of today is traditionally known as the parable of the prodigal son but that covers only a section of the whole parable. The parable itself has got three different characters, who each brings something different in the parable or the story narrated by Jesus. When Christ stated to narrate the story he tell us of a man who had two sons. Out of the blue the young son comes to the father and asks the share of the estate. I said out of the blue because we are not give the background of the story or the reasons why he had to behave like that, first of all the division of the patrimony or the inheritance according to the book of Sirach 33: 23 is supposed to be done at the our of death. When you look at this young man you can conclude that he does not want to belong to this family and is going to show this by taking his belongings few days after and go to a distant country. Coming to the older son one can say the same thing also he does not belong to this family and yet is staying there. In his response talking to his father, he never used the word father and used the pronoun you twice. He wants something or the payment so that he could celebrate with his friends. He does not

talk about the family dinner. He considers himself clean and he cannot enter the home because of his younger brother who decided to spend the inheritance with the prostitutes exactly like the Pharisees who are accusing Christ of receiving sinners and eating with them.

The father of the two sons because his preoccupation was on the united family had to ignore some of the things which you and I could have considered most important. He ignored those things not without pain. Going through the passage we can image the pain he went through in order to have his family united:

- The younger son wanted him dead
- Think of the neighbours and relatives upon hearing what has happened.
- The feeling he heard when the son left the home.
- Image him every day going to the market place trying to inquire if anyone met or seen his son.
- Imagine him every day waking up in the morning and seating facing the direction his son took with the hope of seeing him coming back home.
- His life is at a standstill because he cannot think of anything else but his son.
- He did not care what the people were going to say seeing the old man, a patriarch running and throwing himself on the neck of the young man.
- When the older son come back does not want to enter the home because of the hatred he had of his younger brother.
- Imagine him leaving the table and the guests in order to try and have the older son back at home.
- The older son not calling him father and refusing to accept the younger sibling as his brother.

In all those situations the father is ready to forgive both his sons so that there be unity in the family and in fact communion. His joy was in seeing his family united. One could even imagine the joy he had when seeing the younger son coming back home. He could not allow him to finish his confessions and he could not grant him his request of being treated like one of the paid servants but decided to reinstate him back in the family by giving him the robe or the best garment, renewing the covenant between him and the family by giving him the ring, declaring him a free man by giving the sandals and crowning everything by having a feast because of having his son back in life, not by the prayers of Lukau but by mercy and forgiveness. Really this man is not like us how can he allow

himself to go through this type of humiliation and suffering and still be ready to forgive, only God can do this as his love does not change. A man who does not remember the sins, in fact the term justice is not used even once in this parable. Paul would say to the Ephesians: "It is God who is rich in mercy." (Eph 2,4). Really Christ receiving sinners and eating with them fulfils John 14,9 where he said: "He who sees me sees the Father." If all paternities or fatherhoods would model themselves to the father of the two sons, all families would be a nice place or environment to stay in and also our parishes would be really communities of faith. To you who are going to be fathers very soon in the parishes or communities of faith I urge you to work for unity, unite the people of God. Whether there is an envelope or no envelope people should feel belonging in the parish.
