

Valencia Lenten Mission 2013

WITNESSING TO THE FAITH - RETURNING HOME....Luke 15: 11-32

Talk #3 – Let Your Light Shine before Men

By Br. Kyle Dardaine CTC

So brothers and sisters, tonight we return to the familiar story of the Prodigal Son again which we have heard read over the last 2 nights. On the 1st night we reflected on the first character of the story and we learnt the nature of our Father, Creator of the Light of Life and giver of the eternal gift of the Light of Faith. Last night we reflected on the journey of the character of the Prodigal son, the younger of the two sons. We used this son to examine the call to the journey of faith expressed in his difficult, tumultuous, rough and sometimes very dark journey. Tonight we end with the last character being the elder son. So I ask you tonight to listen deeply to the character of the elder son. As the reading is proclaimed please pay particular attention to the movements taking place with his character and how the story develops around him.

READ TEXT...

1. Ok so let's jump right into the elder son, the one who has known the Father longer, the one who was with the Father first, the one who works so hard for the Father, the one who knows the Kingdom inside out, the son who has always done the right thing and has lived to please his merciful and generous Father....
 - a. Vs. 25: 'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. The servant told him, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the calf we had been fattening because he has got him back safe and sound." Well from how I described the elder son a short while ago let's continue the text:

Vs. 28: So the elder son immediately asked the servant to fetch his royal garments and ordered the hot tub be prepared so he could quickly have himself scrubbed in a delightful bubble bath. Vs. 29: He quickly got dressed with the help of his personal servants all the while whistling and singing filled with the excitement and expectation of seeing his long estranged brother that had returned home to their Father's mansion. Vs. 30: The elder son soon joined the fete and embraced his brother with a kiss and a gift of his own and whispered into his ear, "oh how marvelous it is for brethren to dwell in the house of the Father together".

- b. We may laugh and so now but there is a very serious implication for all of us in the way the story really goes:

Vs. 28: He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out and began to urge him to come in; but he retorted to his father, "All these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property -- he and his loose women -- you kill the calf we had been fattening."

Let's be real. The elder son reflects us sometimes in our attitude and our behaviors where people who are '*worst sinners*' than us are concerned. He also reflects sometimes our attitude towards certain subsets of people in our society. His attitude is self-righteous, self-praising, and judgmental. His natural instinct or first response is to point out to the Father all the good things he has done and he begins to list all the sins of his brother.

- c. What does this matter to the topic of witnessing to the faith? Look at the Father in the story and what we see are his core values and virtues. He communicates through His actions compassion, concern and care for the lost and abandoned, forgiveness and even joy. Now compare the

son and what values and virtues he exhibits that we see in the Father. That's right, NONE! What kind of witness to the Father's life is the elder son giving? It would seem that all this time he has boasted about living in the father's house has not helped him to become like the Father. We don't see the Father's life and way in him instead we see a very judgmental and self-centered way. He is in fact showing us a counter-witness. We could say that the fruit has fallen very far from the tree. In fact if the younger son had first encountered the elder, maybe out in the fields, before meeting the Father, he may have in fact caused the Prodigal, repentant son to turn away and not return home, thinking that if this is how he thinks of me and treats me, I better not try the Father.

- d. In Matthew's gospel Chap 7: 16-18a, Jesus tells the disciples "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit..."
- e. We have to use this year of faith to consider, "what is the witness I will offer of the Father's kingdom?" What have I experienced in this life of faith that I want others to experience? What are the fruits of life with Father, redeemed by the Son and empowered by the Spirit look and taste like? We cannot afford brothers and sisters to become like the elder son in our journey of faith. We cannot afford to settle for just attending Mass every weekend, serving on the altar, reading at mass or even preaching as dynamic as I do and yet still we are not seeking to deepen our conversion and to grow to become more like our Father in Heaven.
- f. In this year of Faith, the temptation could be to think that the good fruit is for us to do more for Jesus, to simply preach more or work hard for God and run up and down for the priest more... The truth is the elder son was coming from doing hard work in the fields, he was laboring in the vineyard. When you reflect deeper on the words of Benedict in his

letter, Porta Fidei, on this year of faith, you will see that He is saying that this year is not for us to focus on doing more but to focus more on our becoming, our becoming more like Jesus, our becoming more like the Father, our becoming more like the fruit of the Spirit...

(Song – The fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace...)

g. In His letter Benedict says it so well and I quote:

The Year of Faith, from this perspective, is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world. In the mystery of his death and resurrection, God has revealed in its fullness the Love that saves and calls us to conversion of life through the forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 5:31). For Saint Paul, this Love ushers us into a new life: “We were buried ... with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Through faith, this new life shapes the whole of human existence according to the radical new reality of the resurrection. To the extent that he freely cooperates, man’s thoughts and affections, mentality and conduct are slowly purified and transformed, on a journey that is never completely finished in this life. “Faith working through love” (Gal 5:6) becomes a new criterion of understanding and action that changes the whole of man’s life.

h. Brothers and sisters we if we are sons and daughters of God then we must live like it. The world out there, this country, the people of Valencia community, your family, friends, co-workers and your enemies need to see the fruits of the Kingdom in you so as to draw them to the Father. I strongly believe that this is the task of the New Evangelisation. We must be constantly seeking the power of God’s spirit not to pray in tongues more or to heal people more, as good as those are. However we need to seek the ever renewing force of the Holy Spirit so as to continuously become converted to Christ; to love as he loves.

2. Matthew 5: 13-16, Jesus is teaching his disciples a very important lesson on a very important mountain, during a very important sermon. He says:

You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under people's feet. You are light for the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.

- a. *You are light for the world* says the Lord. You have to put your faith, your love, your charity into action on the hill-tops of this country, on the mountains of your work places and on the highways and bi-ways of this community. You are the light of whatever world the Lord has inserted you into, do not let the darkness overcome you. St. Pauls says, *“it’s time now for you to wake from your slumber, you are sons of the light and daughters of the Day.”*

(Song – Awake from your slumber)

- b. Yes dear friends, we are the sons and daughters of this new millennium. It is you and I that Blessed John Paul II charged with the task to build the new civilization of love, to build on earth the city of God!
- c. Close eyes and imagine the civilization of love. Choose one word to say what you want to see in a new Trinidad and a new world. (PAUSE)
Ask for words to be said aloud.
- d. How will we build it? How will that come to be? We have to become the new civilization of love that we want to see. We must become what we say we are. Sons and daughters of the light, children of the Father, fruit

of the Kingdom, Lights of the World. What is interesting to me is the Scripture Matthew 5 where Jesus gives us this great message that we are light of the world etc comes at the end of the sermon on the mount. So biblically what Jesus is saying to us is very clear. To be the great Lights we need to be so that men will see our lives and glorify the Father in heaven...and the only way to do that is to go out and live the Beatitudes, Poor in spirit, Gentle, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, be the peace we want to see and so on and so on.

Conclusion:

Rom 8: "the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed"

(Song-This little light of mine)

Reflection and altar call to "let your light shine before men"