

***Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time***  
***August 23, 2020***

*“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.” (Luke 15:20)*

As we conclude our reflection upon sin and reconciliation, I stressed last weekend that I intended to focus our reflection upon the story of the Prodigal Son using it as a guide to assist us in developing a deeper understanding of the Sacrament of Confession. Allow me to begin with a question for you to ponder. Do you see yourself as being actively involved in an open, defiant, rebellion against all of the values you were raised with at home? I will assume that none here has ever considered themselves as living in this fashion. And yet, when we choose to live in a state of sin, neglecting the Sacrament of Confession, we are doing just that.

The story of the Prodigal Son continues to both fascinate and educate mankind down through the ages. Many have come to see themselves, their lives and choices, vividly illustrated in the actions of the younger son. I propose to you today a reason for this is our own desire for and failure to attain true and lasting acceptance in love. Similar to the younger son, we too have grown up in the home (church) of a father (God) who accepts us and loves us without our having to prove anything. Equally as true, we too have heard upon the winds the same whispers the younger son heard - *“Only in a distant land will we find the acceptance and the love our hearts desire.”* Led by fickle hearts, we too abandon our home and begin our journeys seeking boon companions who will supply relief to our aching hearts and troubled minds. Consider many of the things we have each heard from childhood which, when finally attained, were going to prove to both ourselves and others that we had finally come of age and were successful. How many times have we been told success is measured in good grades, a college education, placing first, trophies in sports, the friends we associate with, the profession we choose, the connections we have made through our job, the size of our house, the car we drive, the amount of money we possess, the popularity we aspire to have, the “right” person we marry, the importance of our last name? These are just a few of the many whispers we have all heard upon the winds of this life. Excluding a good spouse or true friends, have any of the rest quelled the stirrings in our hearts for love and acceptance? The older I get, not to mention the closer I move toward the exit door of life, the more I find myself regretting the time lost in pursuit of the whispers on the winds.

I have often heard it said; *“the stronger the winds, the more deafening the sound.”* This, I have found, is one of the “problems” when we compare the sound of the whispers to the whisper of the Father. Neither the voice of the father in the story, or the voice of our Heavenly Father can compare to the winds of this world. The voice of the Father is not boisterous, forcing itself upon me. Yet it is unrelenting. A constant gentle breeze, if you will, beckoning us to return to a home filled with love. A home which accepts us, negating any need to prove ourselves. A home of a tear stained, heartbroken father scouring the countryside in hopes of our return.

My dear parishioners, to understand the Sacrament of Confession is to allow yourself to be touched by this voice. To put aside the pride and preconceptions of love, returning to the one home where we are not judged by any person or anything. To express our sorrow to the one who suffered and died for us in those beautiful words; “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your beloved child.” And, to hear and feel that most joyous, embrace of love through His words; “Let us celebrate for my beloved child is alive and has returned home.” For the Sacrament of Confession is to accept the fact that His love for us is a GIFT, not something we have to prove ourselves to earn.