

‘... there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.’”

(Luke 15:10)



Reflection:

The gospel of Luke, Chapter 15 contains 3 parables, generally known as the ‘parables of mercy’. We see another aspect of Gods’ mercy in action through these parables, the mercy that seeks and converts the lost. Jesus tell the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the compassionate father, one after the other. While the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin end with a celebration, the parable of the compassionate father has many potential endings. We will dwell on the parable of the lost sheep and lost coin this month.

The parable of the lost sheep speaks about a shepherd who has 100 sheep, and who goes in search of one sheep that was lost. The shepherd instinctively knows that the lost sheep is in great danger and goes in search for that one sheep leaving the other ninety-nine behind. It sounds contradictory that the shepherd leaves behind ninety-nine sheep – a considerably large number of sheep- possibly exposed to danger, while he focusses his attention solely on finding the one lost sheep. One versus Ninety-nine?

Jesus’ approach to sinners is explained in the ironic act of the shepherd: those who think (or assume) they are without sin are like the ninety-nine sheep left alone by themselves without a shepherd. There is a risk for the ninety-nine sheep in the desert as well as for the missing sheep but with the substantial difference that the lost sheep needs to be rescued while the others might think they are safe. The joy at the end of the parable is true to life. Finding a lost sheep is the joy of a shepherd ... and of God who rejoices more over a converted sinner than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not (or deceive themselves that they do not) need conversion. The way Jesus sees conversion is thought-provoking: Conversion is not the fruit of the one who converts but the fruit of the action of God who seeks the one who is lost. Conversion is always the action of grace given by the One who puts the lost sheep on his shoulders and goes home. It is essential however to cooperate with this given grace if conversion needs to happen. While God shows mercy by seeking out the lost and bringing them back, this grace needs to be responded to by receiving and appropriating it with gratitude. And since conversion originates from grace, it needs to be shared.

The Pharisees and the scribes who were questioning Jesus’ attitude towards sinners, have a choice. They can share the joy of conversion given to publicans and sinners, or they can object to it, falling into the presumption of being safe in the desert, like a flock that is actually in harm’s way because it has no shepherd. The parable however does not say anything to suggest whether the sheep are in danger or whether they are in a safe place. But looking from a different perspective, people who think they are without sin or that they do not need a savior (the ninety-nine sheep) and people who realize

that they are lost (the lost sheep) are viewed differently. Heaven rejoices over the lost one than the ninety-nine righteous or self-righteous ones. Ultimately both this category of people need the mercy of God. So whether you are lost or whether you are lost but not admitting it- you need the mercy of God. In other words, a person does not need to be lost in order to be found; nor does being left in the desert mean a person is not being sought by God. The parable of the lost coin is added next to highlight the divine origin of conversion and the celebration in heaven for the one lost and found. The parables also focus on how precious each one of us are to God. He looks on us with such compassion that we should feel privileged to be his children, a sheep of His flock, a member of His body the Church. The parables of lost sheep and the lost coin presents God's joy in our conversion. Well, how can we resist conversion when He takes us up on His shoulders with His tender and merciful love. We are drawn to conversion because of the mercy God shows to us.

Being members of the Church and the Jesus Youth movement, God is showing abundance of mercy to each one of us, relentlessly seeking us when we are lost. As much as we identify ourselves with the lost sheep, we are even more exhorted to imitate the Good Shepherd. There are many around us who are either lost or lost but not admitting they are lost. As shepherds to each other, let us selflessly seek out these other sheep around us and be channels of God's mercy in their lives. Let all glory, honor and power be to Him who sits on the throne of mercy.



Saint's quote:

If the Crucifix were to scold me for being 'too lenient', I would say in return: 'it was you who gave me this bad example, Lord! For I have yet to arrive at the madness of dying for souls.

(St. Leopold Mandic)



Pope's quote

Jesus looks at Matthew and awakens "something new" within him, "something that he did not know". The "gaze of Jesus" makes him feel an interior "wonder", and makes him hear "the call of Jesus: follow me". "It only took a moment" to understand that that look had changed his life forever. And it is in this moment that "Matthew says yes, leaves everything and goes with the Lord".

The first moment of the encounter, which consists of "a deep spiritual experience", is followed by a second experience: that of celebration. The Gospel continues with Jesus sitting at table with publicans and sinners; those who "were rejected by society". This "is the contradiction of the celebration of God: the Lord feasts with sinners". Luke's Gospel (15) clearly says that there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who have no need of repentance. This is why celebration is "very important", because the encounter with Jesus and the mercy of God should be celebrated.

Pope Francis

Morning meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Martha on Monday, Friday, 5 July 2013



Act of mercy - Pardon the offenses, cloth the naked

In all the parables of mercy, God the Father is presented with full of Joy, especially when he pardons. When we reconcile with God, we feel the warmth of His embrace - His infinite mercy! Hence pardoning offences is an imperative because mercy has been first shown to us. (cfr.M.V n. 9). Let us ask for the grace to experience this joy of reconciliation in our life and reflect on what stops us from attaining it. A Daily examen of conscience would help us to develop attitudes and gestures of reconciliation in our life. In Pauline tradition, clothing the naked, is the imagery of old man putting on Christ through the power of the Spirit (cfr. Col 3:10; Gal 3:27). As we prepare ourselves for the Jesus Youth Commitment day, let us make constant efforts to clothe ourselves with the Spirit of Christ. By frequently receiving the sacrament of reconciliation and sacrament of Eucharist let's bathe in His merciful Indulgence which make us new creations in the Spirit.

Mother Mary, Cause of our joy, pray for us. Hail Mary...

