

September 15, 2019 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Our parish still has no phone lines. I've talked to 10 people over at CenturyLink last week and nobody will listen to me. I'm not an expert. I just want a tech to come out and I can show him what's going on. I was really upset Friday because I called and said, "You guys were supposed to be here by 5:00." It was 5:15. "Oh, it says here it can be done remotely." No, it cannot be done remotely, I need somebody here. "Well, you've got to wait until the work order's finished at 6:00 tonight and call back to repair and service and talk to them." So I did. They're going to come out Monday, when I'm not here. Maybe this week we'll have phone service, who knows. It's interesting building buildings. Somebody was asking me the other day, "Isn't it tremendously stressful? How can you do that and be spiritual too?" I said, "You don't." I'm going to read you a modern day prodigal son.

Dear Dad,

It is with heavy heart that I write this letter. I decided to elope with my new girlfriend tomorrow. We wanted to avoid a scene with you and Mom. I found real passion with Tamara, and she is so lovely even with her nose piercing, tattoos and her tight motorcycle clothes. It's not only the joy Dad, she's pregnant and Tamara said that we'll be very happy. Even though you won't care for her as she is so much older than me, she already owns a trailer in the woods and has a stack of firewood for the whole winter. She wants to have many more children with me and that's now one of my dreams too. Tamara taught me that marijuana doesn't really hurt anyone and we'll be growing it for us and trading with our friends for all the cocaine and ecstasy we want. In the meantime, we'll pray that science will find a cure for HIV so that Tamara can get better, she sure deserves it. Don't worry Dad, I'm 15 years old now and I know how to take care of myself. Someday I'll come back to visit so you get to know your grandchildren.

Your ever loving son,

P.S. Don't worry Dad, I was just wanting to show you that some things are worse than a bad report card, which is on your desk. I'm really next-door, text me when it's safe to come home.

Normally we get readings that are about us trying to straighten out our lives, about us doing something so that we can be closer to God. But today's gospel is all about God. It's not about us, it's about God. God is the one that searches for us. He has this quest that he wants to search for us. This path, this quest is so passionate, it's over the top, that he wants to find us and be with us. So the things that we have to do is really when you think about it; let ourselves be found. Let ourselves be found, let God find us. We go around trying to find God, there's all these books about how to find God, how to be more holy, more spiritual. But, just stay put. What do they say to do when you're lost in the woods? Should you move around or should you stay put? You should stay put so they can find you. Same thing with God. Right now we're in a world we're running around crazy all the time, everywhere, doctor's appointments, kids and their activities, all this other stuff, shopping, whatever. And yet, if we just sit still once in a while; let God find us. This craziness, we call it loopiness, it's got a bad risk. We look at the story of the sheep and the coin, we look at the son, it's great risk that these guys are doing. It's bad economics. God is so passionately in love with us. Catherine of Siena said in Italian, "God is patso demorii." So crazy in love with us that he'll do anything, he does crazy things. We see in our first parable that a shepherd makes

his living off his sheep. To leave 99 by themselves in the middle of the wilderness and go find one, one lost sheep, that's crazy. It doesn't make sense in our world. Bad economics, when you come back 45 might be gone, then what are you going to do? But God is so crazy in love, patso demorii, that he'll do anything to get one soul. What is he saying? There's more righteous joy over one soul that repents and is found, than 99 righteous. And when he comes home he says, "Hey guys, let's have a party, I found one sheep, I left the rest of them alone, but they're alright." They'd say, "You're crazy man." People would look at you and stay away from you because you know, you're crazy. "Are you possessed?" But that's what God does. He'd do anything to get one soul. Or the woman; ten coins and losing one. These coins are worth a penny. Can you imagine losing a penny in the house and tearing it apart to find a penny? I'd let the vacuum cleaner do it. But this woman tears her house apart to find this one coin worth a penny. And then what's crazier is she calls her friends and says, "Let's have a party, I found a penny I lost. What would you do if one of your friends called you up and said that? I'd say do I have to bring anything but then I would ask later on, does that make sense to throw a big huge party? You had ten cents in your hand, you lost one, you tore the house apart, you've got to put it back together, and now you're going to pay a hundred bucks for a party. That's God; that's how patso demorii, crazy in love with us he is. These things are all about God. It means we just have to sit and wait; God will find us.

Then of course, the one that everybody talks about, the prodigal son, this is crazy. The son tells the father, "I wish you were dead, give me my inheritance, I wish you were dead, I don't want any part of you." That's a death sentence back then. The father had every right under the law, to kill his kid. As Bill Cosby's dad used to say, "And make another one just like yah." But the kid does that, and he goes off and he messes up, and then the father welcomes him back. You know what Jesus' audience would have been doing? The man is crazy, the father's crazy. He should have punished him big time, done something; not just welcome him back and put a robe on him, sandals and a ring. Once again, God's crazy, crazy and madly in love with us. I like it in Italian, patso demorii. Sounds much better in Italian. That's how God is. And that's what these readings are about. Jesus wants us to know how much God loves us. Yet these meanings are not brought out. We hear about vengeance, we hear about anger, we hear about all this stuff, but God is so in love with us, if we just sit still, he'll find us. The three examples represent three types of people. The first, the coin, it's an inanimate object, it doesn't even know its lost, let alone to be found, so its spiritually dead. Some people are so spiritually dead, they don't know they're lost. They have no idea, they don't know who Jesus is, they don't know who God is. They are in a region of dislikeness. We're made in the image and likeness of God; they're in a region that's totally opposite, as Saint Augustine says. But God searches for them. He doesn't wait for them to do anything, he searches for them and he brings them back. The sheep; well the sheep is more than a coin, its got rationality a little bit of it. It moves around breathes, that kind of thing. But if you're around sheep, when a sheep gets caught by itself in a bramble, a thicket, or it falls in a pit and can't get out, what does it do? It bleats, it calls for help. There are people that know they're in trouble and they call for help. They're aware that they're in a mess, like alcoholics that hit bottom and go to AA. They are able to say, "Help." That's like the sheep bleating because its lost. Its bleating because it doesn't know where the rest of them are. The third kind of person is the son; conscious rebellion against his father. Cold blooded, rational thought process, analytical skills still active, why? We know this because he's sitting there with the pigs, no good clothes, totally filthy dirty, starving to death with the pigs. His mind starts working and it says, "Oh wait a minute, people at my Dad's house are better off than I am, I'll go back there and do that." Does it say anything about loving Dad or having Dad forgive him? No. but there's a

rational process, there's a freedom of will, there's a freedom of mind. God respects our freedom to make choices, free choice, free will. I was reading something on the internet just recently that said that there was an argument against us having free will. But that's been debunked now, we all have free will. So, the son is able to make a decision, the son is able to come back to the father, to God. We get a lot of those in church, that happens at Easter vigil. The whole thing about this gospel is that when the sheep is found, the coin is found, when the son comes back and is found, what happens? What does God do? He's overjoyed, completely overjoyed, not looking for punishment, not looking at retribution, he's overjoyed. He seeks, he finds, he runs to those of us that need him. All we have to do is say here I am God, come and get me, and God will do the rest. We've got this big mentality we've had for centuries that God is up there checking off good, checking off bad, and at the end of our lives he adds them up and says, "Oh, you've got too many bad ones, guess where you're going." And it's not. God is totally and passionately in love with us and that's what Jesus wants us to know. This gospel is about that. Yes, He has gospels about repentance, He's got gospels about prayer, He's got gospels about all these things that we can do, but in the end what matters? That we're available and waiting for God.

God bless you.