

4 SUNDAY LENT C 2016

My brother Mike and his wife Megan have three kids. When one of the kids is naughty, and it is usually the boy, Megan says to Mike, "Do you know what *your* son did?" Grady is his mommy's son when he is well-behaved or sleeping, otherwise he belongs to his daddy. Our dispositions toward one another are reflected in the way we think about relationships.

This is going on in the gospel reading. When the prodigal son decided to return home, he practices a line that reflects what he believes to be a change in family relationships, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son."

Have you ever thought about yourself in tis way? Sometimes our mistakes are really big and our sins are serious. We struggle to imagine how we will ever be loved again, or trusted or accepted by family or by God.

In the parable, the other son seems to agree with the assessment. Notice in his conversation with the father he does not talk about "my brother" but "your son."

Neither son understood the nature of love, that their father's love was irrevocable. The father would never stop loving his sons, especially when they are undeserving.

Remember the story began like this, "...but the Pharisees and the scribes began to complain saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Indeed, the love God has for us is irrevocable; our sins cannot diminish the Father's love and our good works cannot earn it.

St. Paul is well aware of God's irrevocable love. He reminds us that once we know God's love, we cannot keep it to ourselves, "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

If there was free gas at the local station, you would tell a friend. If there was a tornado coming you would certainly tell your family. God's love is irrevocable. God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ Jesus. This grace is available to us, and uniquely in the Sacrament of Penance. Who are you going to tell? The message has been entrusted to us, we better get out the word:

God loves us and God's love is irrevocable.