

Lent- a Journey of 3 Turns

“There comes a time in your life, when you walk away from all the drama and people who create it. You surround yourself with people who make you laugh. Forget the bad, and focus on the good. Love the people who treat you right, pray for the ones who don't. Life is too short to be anything but happy. Falling down is a part of life, getting back up is living.”

A Christian can be described as a person on his/her way home; our whole life is a journey towards the Merciful Father, a journey in which we are led by Jesus Christ who is the way, the truth and the life. Lent is a season of grace which invites us to live for God. In this season we are to make our journey towards God. This involves first and foremost making a journey into self, which I call, **Turn to Self (inward)**. When we turn to self then we find out what keeps us away from God and others, all that breaks our relationship with God and others, simply said Sin. We begin to feel the need of God, we long for His love. There is sincere grief for our sins. After we have made the journey to self then we make the second move to **Turn away from Sin**. Of-course a challenging task but with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can do it. Lenten observances of prayer, fasting and almsgiving strengthen our relationship with God and neighbor, and also help us to uproot sins from our hearts. Finally, we **Turn to God** with contrition and a sincere heart. God hates our sins and not us. Sin takes us away from God. It is not God who goes away from us but we from God.

For me the best example for these three stages of our spiritual journey is the story of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15: 11-32). The Prodigal son (lost son) is able to let go of his self-righteousness when ‘came to himself.’ The bitter experience made him reflect. It must have taken him days of hunger and nights of remorse to come to his final decision, the only sensible thing to do, while there was still time, was to go back home. The love of his father which he had enjoyed for years, prompts him to take the right turns; first he *turns to self* and realizes that he made a big mess of his life, he had chosen death over his loving father, “I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.” Now there is longing for his father and hatred for the sins committed. Second, he consciously chose to *turn away from sin*, from the bad choices he made which almost led him to death. He does not justify his previous actions nor does he try to excuse his sins. He accepts and owns responsibility for what he did wrong, makes a decision to improve his life, turns away from sin in repentance with a holy grief. Third, he *turned toward his father* and mournfully confessed and said “I have sinned.” And we know at the end of the story, his loving father, without a word of condemnation, embraced his son, “But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.” The best robe on him, a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet are external signs of restoring his status as son by his loving father. And there was a great celebration in the household of the father with the fatted calf.

Whether prodigal or paranoid or whatever, we need not feel rejected. Although our sins have led Jesus to His death, but not for long, He still invites us to return home any time we are ready. But let us not take too long to be ready. There is more to life than what we find in this world. Heaven rejoices when sinners repent and return to God the heavenly Father.