

Pastoral Reflection
Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 27 2022

After hearing the Parable of the Forgiving Father, a child told their catechist, "If God is like this, that is all I need to know." I feel the same way. The loving, compassionate, forgiving, enthusiastic, affectionate, celebratory father portrayed in this parable heals the lingering fear from my pre-Vatican II Catholic grade school religious formation. What a beautiful image when the father runs to meet his son and embraces him. No lecture. Just loving embrace. And when the elder son feels resentful, this father's gigantic heart is big enough for both sons. The forgiving father is unusual in the honor shame Mediterranean culture of Jesus' time. He is like a mother, showering mercy. In fact, I can imagine Jesus' hearers enthusiastically supporting the position of the elder son.

Reconciliation is at the heart of Jesus's message. When I sat by the Sea of Galilee where Jesus forgave Peter's betrayal I had the insight that forgiveness is the key to the kingdom that Peter received. Forgiveness occupies the very core of the prayer of Jesus; The English rendering from his spoken Aramaic goes something like, "From the brokenness of our wrongful actions, restore us to wholeness in You, as we restore others through embracing forgiveness. Loose the cords of mistakes binding us, as we release -the strands we hold of other's faults. Restore us to connectedness." May this be so.

Madonna Kuciejczyk-Kernan