

## **Prodigal Son & Carmelite Prayer**

Luke 15:11-32

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Father Eli-Joseph uses the parable of the Prodigal Son to introduce silent prayer during the 2022 Lenten Retreat at the Carmelite Monastery in Broussay, France.

This parable is not usually associated with Carmelite Prayer. Yet, as you will see, it contains all the elements of Carmelite or Silent prayer.

We will take the Prodigal Son as our Master in prayer who is like each one of us and is looking to return to God, the Father in the Holy Spirit

As you listen to an excerpt of the parable being read, notice how all falls apart around the Prodigal. His life then goes from darkness to light as his attitude triggers a personal conversion, a return to the Father.

### **READ LUKE 15: 11-21**

This parable explains everything concerning the history of man. Jesus gives us this parable to shed light on our situation today. Our lives have been marked by original sin that has pushed us far away from God. In other words, sin has pushed us away from the interior life and the intimate relationship that God has wanted with man for all eternity. Yet, man has lost his way by

wanting to manage himself what God has given him.

The Prodigal Son takes his fortune and moves away from life-giving relationships towards a life of disorder and death. He squanders all his money forming bad relationships, such as with prostitutes, on relationships that do not correspond to his deep nature.

Once all of his money gone, he would have problems with food. He is hungry and wonders how he is going to eat.

He asks food of a man, perhaps the devil according to the tradition of the Church—someone who would not raise him up but rather push him down.

Somehow, the Prodigal knew that the food offered was not for good for him.

How did he know? He knew because he **turned within himself** – the fundamental movement in recollection. He turned from the exterior world to his inner world, the world of his soul, his heart, his spirit.

This movement of turning within **initiated** the conversion that will drive him to his father's house to seek once again his father's face.

To find his father's face, the prodigal son had to make an effort to recall through a deep intuition that he had once been

conceived, loved and nourished by someone.

The face of his father he had in his heart, in his being, is not yet the real face of the Father. To find the true face of the Father he had to **get up** and then **rise up**. This rising up is a **resurrection**. He turned from death to life with God in His house.

By going through **two movements**, first **entering within** himself which then brings about a **rising up**, a **resurrection**. The Prodigal will pass from dark (death) to light (new life). The movement of recollection begins in him and ends in his father's house. We have to make that **voluntary effort** to turn within to find the Father's house within. Our Father reestablishes a right relationship with Him as children of God

If we are not in this house, God is not able to have an alliance with us. Man was created to be the Son of God -- the only being to receive that grace. In fact, it is our **primary vocation**, to become a son of God.

It all starts with the movement of turning within or recollection, our part.

We do not practice silent prayer to feel good but to experience an interior **existential crisis** or a call to live more fully; in other words to realize that the practice of **silent prayer** is a matter of **life or death**.

Those who decide not to turn within will end up like the Prodigal Son – eating anything and end up malnourished. His soul will not be nourished by God's presence within and so it suffocates, dries up and dies.

I pray that grace for you, that is to realize that to practice silent prayer is a question of life or death. This prayer initiates a dynamic of life from finding the presence of God within. It profoundly nourishes the soul which satisfies our first and foremost vocation of being Sons of God and living His life which will make us very happy.

This path of prayer consisting of these two movements of first turning within as with the Prodigal Son and then getting up allow us a new experience of God, the Father. It is in the silence that you will have a new image of the Father.

As with the Prodigal, the Father takes us in His arms and draws us close to His heart and close to the Son and Holy Spirit. The early Church Fathers spoke of one hand being the Son and the other the Holy Spirit. In other words, this new life of prayer brings us into the heart of the Trinity.

It is my prayer that in your deepest self you respond to the call to live more fully, realizing that you aren't living up to your capacity, that you thirst for God and that you seek to wake up in you that thirst for Him.

I also hope that the practice of silent prayer will allow you a new encounter with the Father that will uncover for you a new aspect of the Father's face as it did for the Prodigal Son to whom God showed both love and mercy. AMEN

Part 2 will speak to the Prodigal Son & Teresa of Avila;

And finally, Part 3 will offer a guided time of prayer.

Translated from French

