



## Meditation 1

### **“Father, give me my share of the estate”**

It is good that the Word of God does not echo an abstract idea, but resonates in current life, in our own lives, because only in this way can It enlighten and give fruit. I believe, for example, that from our concrete experience of families, of the community of parents and children that we are, it is easier for us to grasp the intensity of meaning that is played out in the parable of the Prodigal Son. In one way or another we have all already experienced it: that is why this parable is so unforgettable and so challenging for us.

The efficacy of this story that Jesus tells in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 15: 11-32) also results from the fact that it is so similar to our common family world, to its successes and weaknesses. There is no doubt that Jesus knows us from within, and uses images capable of deeply touching our heart. To begin with, the person who opens the parable: a son addresses his father and asks him something, "Father, give me." This happens daily in all families. The family is a permanent exercise of giving, and this daily and repeated exercise - we can say it - structures its reality. Therefore, the first part of the prodigal's phrase contains nothing very surprising.

Throughout our family story we are called to give so many things to our children: first, we give them life in collaboration with the Creator, give them time, love, presence, word; to give them a bath and food when they are little; give them confidence and inspiration as they grow; give them comfort in tears and humility in victories; give, give .... And the truth is that in this continuous giving of ourselves to our children, we don't feel that our life is spent or diminished, but on the contrary happier and enlarged.

If we look at our lives as mothers and fathers, we can see how much sacrifice, work, and effort we have been, and are willing, to take to respond positively to the call of a child who comes to us and asks, "Father, give me." Often our pain is not being able to give our children everything we wanted or idealized! And we must also make a path through that pain.

But then one day children ask us not just this or that thing, as they have always done, but they tell us that they wish to take hold of their own lives, and even that we help them to do so. "Father, give me my share of the estate." When they are children and we think about it, we shudder, a shiver comes over us as if a sword of pain pierced our soul.

Then as they grow up we get used to this idea, but it does not mean that we do not suffer when we watch them leave, move from home, from our city, to go away.



"Father, give me my share of the estate." When we hear this we are so afraid: "Are they prepared for this?"; "Will they be able to manage what life will present to them without our direct presence?"; "Will they be strong enough to flee from evil and wise enough to augment good?"

No matter how great our fears may be, the filial relationship cannot but be an adventure of freedom. If, out of fear or the temptation of domination, we feel we can control the fate of our children, we are terribly wrong. Love is not to shackle, but to endow those we love with wings. Or to say it in a different way: to endow them with the highest capacity of being, accepting that they live their uniqueness. Of course this is not exactly an easy thing. It requires from us an inner work of detachment, a patient learning of giving freely and the most unshakable hope. But aren't detachment, giving freely and hope synonymous with love?

When the prodigal son approaches his father in the parable and asks, "Father, give me the share of the estate," we are well placed to understand the gravity of what he is asking. And if we accept that the father represents the very God that Jesus came to reveal to us, our astonishment is even greater. However, it is curious that the father of the parable does not ask questions to try to buy time, or negotiate conditions to give the inheritance. God gives. The love God has for us, His children, is an unconditional love. Faith is not a state of subjugation, but a relational space of adventure and risk. In faith, we discover what the philosopher Simone Weil said: that to have faith in God is first of all to understand and marvel at the faith that God places in us. "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" (Psalm 8:4)

In fact, God sees a beauty in us that we often dare not even think exists. But God sees and does not give up saying it in secret to our vulnerable hearts, reinforcing our freedom. Concerning freedom, St. Paul reminds the Christians of Galatia: "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery". (Gal 5:1).

Today we will have the opportunity of meditating on the horizon and the joy of Christian freedom. Let's begin this morning by praying for it, by contemplating it in a very personal way, giving inner time to it. God listens to us when we say to Him, "Father, give me the share of the estate." What does God's trustful gesture mean to us?