



Autonomous ... yet still Connected

The Gospel tells the story of the rich young man who went astray and caused his own downfall. Yet this wayward son still had merit. He chose to return to his father whom he had ridiculed. He made this decision autonomously which in turn made his father's generosity possible. We have all experienced similar situations in our families, if not in our own homes. Common sense would have us side with the older son who had never wavered. But the patient parent put logic aside and followed his heart and affection for his sons.

With our desire to succeed on our own, we are often reticent to accept God's generosity toward others who don't appear to deserve it. It really bothers us. But this is God's logic and God's promises. This alone must give us confidence that repentance is always possible.

The passages for this Lenten Sunday emphasize maintaining a balance between our search for autonomy and our profound relationship with God. The first reading recounts a positive autonomous experience as former slaves celebrate their relationship with God with the first Passover in the Promised Land. They had *unleavened cakes and parched grain* - nothing very exciting when compared to the selection in our supermarkets. But remember, these people were born in the desert. They had never seen water flowing in a river, nor had they ever eaten fresh fruit. We have to imagine their emotions from these brief passages. God would no longer provide nourishment for his people and they would now be in charge of their future.

In three brief verses, we read about people who risked everything for God as they crossed the desert and eventually enjoyed their reward. God required them to make an autonomous choice and accept the terms of the Covenant. They would be free to choose how they would conduct their lives. The Bible promises a reward so that the faithful would continue to enjoy life and progress, despite their struggles with survival and growth. Though we may sometimes feel that God is not supporting our efforts, this is false! God expects us to be responsible mature partners - people who believe and collaborate in his creation. Though we must contend with our personal failings, we cherish our autonomy.

God took a risk by delegating the management of creation to us and by keeping the door open to reconciliation. In the second reading we find the central focus for this Sunday's message. It proposes a balance between our autonomy and God's gift that is always available: *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.* We can always be *brought back to life* like the young girl in the parable. It is sufficient for us to want to be reinstated in the network of love connecting the Father and Son which we experience through the Holy Spirit.

Alain Faucher, priest

Translated by Honore Kerwin Borrelli

God Keeps His Promise : Be Confident !