



DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

ROOTED IN CHRIST

LENT 2022



THIRSTING *Thursday*

### *Which Character are You?*

In the [Sunday Gospel](#) just a few days ago, Jesus shared the story of the Prodigal son.

*"He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'" (Lk 15:28-32).*

Let's be honest: this story makes us uncomfortable. Whatever character you identify with, it taps into some very real human emotions and dynamics.



Even though we know how the story is going to end, and we get what Jesus is trying to convey about the unconditional love of God, it still gets under our skin. Maybe because it brings up memories of how we have been overlooked, or disregarded. Perhaps it highlights the dysfunction that exists in all of our families. Most likely it plays on the human inclination to think about what we deserve, what's fair, what we feel is owed to us. Certainly it challenges us to let go of expectations and love despite the cost.

The story points out the huge gray area between the two sons, the vast landscape between the one son who has been given everything, without

asking, and the other son who took all that he was due and made off with it.

In our human families of origin, most of us fall somewhere in between those two famous characters. They both had a perfect father, who was able to love them unconditionally. Like the sons, we are wired to receive unconditional love and acceptance from our parents, and whether we realize it or not, we hunger for that love. When our parents fall short (because they are human), we suffer small but cumulative wounds that, over time, shape us into the people we are.

In the absence of being loved unconditionally, how in the world are we supposed to know how to love others with that same love? How can we ever hope to love like the father?

**“Every time you feel hurt, offended, or rejected, you have to dare to say to yourself: “These feelings, strong as they may be, are not telling me the truth about myself. The truth, even though I cannot feel it right now, is that I am the chosen child of God, precious in God’s eyes, called the Beloved from all eternity, and held safe in an everlasting embrace.” — Henri J.M. Nouwen**

It occurs to me that those of us who carry with us the scars of feeling unloved are drawn to the love of the Father. To have felt overlooked, set aside, or undervalued is painful; over time, we can begin to identify with those feelings and feel unworthy of love.

At the heart of the story is the ability to give and receive love, which only the Father is truly capable of. Experiencing the unconditional love of the Father is an antidote to our woundedness and shame, a soothing balm that brings relief. It is through the healing love of God that we can let go of feelings of worthlessness - our false identity - and begin to claim our true identity as beloved sons and daughters.

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Sit with that story for a bit, and allow yourself to recognize how it resonates with you. Spend some time honoring the feelings it brings up. Ask God to come into those broken, vulnerable, raw places in your heart, and heal them.

Then, every time you feel hurt, offended, or rejected, you have to dare to say to yourself: “These feelings, strong as they may be, are not telling me the truth about myself. The truth, even though I cannot feel it right now, is that I am the chosen child of God, precious in God’s eyes, called the Beloved from all eternity, and held safe in an everlasting embrace.” (Henri J.M. Nouwen)



*“At the core of my faith belongs the conviction that we are the*

beloved  
*sons* and  
*daughters*  
of  
God

— *Henri Nouwen.*

I pray that you would walk in the Truth that you are a beloved son or daughter, bought with a price, precious beyond measure. Your life experience may tell you something different, but this is a lie! Everything the Father gives to the Son is our inheritance; God loves you, right now, beyond anything you could imagine. Or deserve. So much so that he would go to the cross for you.



Zach Williams - "Rescue Story" (Official Lyric Video)



Mary Hallman is the Diocesan Secretary for Parish Life. A native of Southern California, she has worked in both parish and diocesan ministry, and has learned from some of the best Catholic and Protestant leaders throughout the country. In her free time, Mary enjoys movies, a good cup of coffee, and the company of family and friends...and she is always looking to meet new people! [Send her a message](#) to say "hello."

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2021 **DIOCESAN**  
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