



4th Sunday of Lent

Luke 15.1-3, 11-32

In today's Gospel reading, we usually focus on the Father's response to his younger son as an example of God's constant love and forgiveness for us. Instead, let's turn our attention to the exchange between the Father and the elder son in today's Gospel. The elder brother is expressing something that many of us can relate to. He feels taken for granted, unappreciated, and resentful that the family's resources are being spent on the wasteful younger brother.

The Father lovingly reminds him that the elder brother has always had access to a good house and good food, and they have to celebrate the younger brother's return. The elder brother may even resent this fact: that the younger brother already got his share of the household and inheritance, and now the father is taking some of the elder brother's half to celebrate the younger brother's return. That's a hard lesson for the elder sibling to swallow, as it would be hard for us to swallow.

Sometimes we take those around us for granted. Do we expect our parents to rescue us from difficult tasks or mistakes we have made? Are we simply waiting for our turn to talk rather than really listening to our sisters and brothers' stories? Have we put more effort into recognizing and thanking guest speakers than our regular teachers at school?

Do we make a habit of recognizing and valuing each other within our own family? Do we turn our eyes away from a man on the side of the street so he doesn't ask us for money? How are we seeing Jesus in them, and treating them as such, if we won't even look them in the eye?

Pope Francis is calling us to develop a Culture of Encounter – a way of being based on seeing Christ in every person and being Christ to them. To not just see, but to really look at each person. To not just hear, but to really listen to those who are sharing their stories. To not just complete the task, but to share an encounter with our neighbours and the people with whom we share life.

Discussion:

- **How can build encounter moments into our daily lives as a family?**
- **Whom are we being called to encounter? What is our plan to invite this encounter?**

If you haven't already met Shominara from Burma, and Rami from Jordan, get to know their stories by visiting the video section of our resources at devp.org/lent/resources.