NOVEMBER 3, 2021
Memorial of St. Charles Borromeo, Bishop
Luke 15: 1-10

"BRING THEM BACK TO GOD."

In yesterday's gospel, Jesus showed His radical command to all His listerners: "None of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."[1] In today's gospel, we see Jesus in different mood, compassionate and understanding. We heard that tax collectors and sinners gathered around Jesus to listen and the Pharisees and scribes were scandalous and rebuked Jesus. For them, no one must have contact to people who are unclean, that is, sinners. Even if to dine and socialize with people a sign of recognition and acceptance, as far as Pharisees were concerned, tax collectors and sinners were non-people, outcasted and dirty. But for Jesus, this was His purpose and mission, to mingle and mix with tax collectors, sinners and outcasts so that He can bring them back to the fold and change them. By that Jesus gave two parables: the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin.

"Each one is a picture of God's attitude towards the sinner and it is very different from that of the Pharisee. The first is of a shepherd who has lost one of 100 sheep entrusted to his care. Without hesitation, the good shepherd leaves the 99 'good' sheep and goes off looking for the stray. When he finds it, he puts it on his shoulders and comes back in jubilation, inviting all his friends and neighbours to rejoice with him. 'Rejoice with me for I have found my lost sheep.' Similarly, concludes Jesus, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who sincerely repents and comes back to God than over many 'righteous' people who have no need to repent, or who think they have no need to repent. There seems to be an ironic and sarcastic tone here. Who does not need to repent of something at some time? Jesus presents a totally different attitude to the repentant sinner, and he gives it as God's own attitude. The second parable is similar. A housewife

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[1] Luke 14: 33 Holy Bible NRSVCE Canadian Bible Society

who has 10 silver pieces – probably the sum total of her wealth – has lost one of her coins. Will she not turn the whole house upside down looking for it? A house like this would typically have no windows and rough earthen floors (and, of course, no electricity!), making a search quite difficult. But, when she does eventually find it, she will call in all her friends and neighbours to share her joy. 'Rejoice with me! I have found the coin I lost.' Again Jesus says there will be even more joy than this in heaven over one sinner who repents. 'In heaven', of course, means 'with God'."[2] My brothers and sisters, God wishes everyone to be saved and restored relationship with Him. He does not rejoice in the loss of anyone. That is why heaven rejoices when one sinner is recovered, found and returned to friendship with God. So, let us always come back to the Lord whenever we go astray and lost. He will totally and without hesitation, embrace and accept us because of His unfailing and absolute love and mercy.

During the time of St. Charles Borromeo, he was known for educating clergy and parishioners by establishing centers for education and seminaries. He dedicated his life, even in his younger years to the service of clergy, the Church and the poor. For him, knowledge has no boundaries, he welcomed and served all for Christ especially those who were 'challenged and outcasted.' "In 1576 a famine struck Milan followed by the plague, and many of the wealthy and powerful fled the city. Archbishop Borromeo remained. He used his own fortune to feed the starving people. When that money was spent, he took loans and went deep into debt. He may have fed 70,000 people per day."[3]

May we imitate St. Charles Borromeo as we serve our brothers and sisters and as Jesus commanded us, let us go after those people who are lost, misguided and outcasted. Let us pray for the grace to be instruments of God and be the guide for those who go astray and bring them back to God who loves them.

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[2] livingspace.sacredspace.ie
[3] www.catholic.org