



Seeing with the Heart Retreat
St. Simon Catholic Parish, Los Altos, CA
Monday, March 4, 2024

Living in Freedom

Rembrandt, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (1669, Hermitage, Saint Petersburg)
Caravaggio, *The Conversion of Saint Paul* (1600, Balbi Collection, Rome)
Caravaggio, *Calling of Saint Matthew* (1600, San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome)

“Spiritual Exercises to overcome oneself, and to order one’s life, without reaching a decision through some disordered affection.” (SpEx n.21).

“Good Shepherd, You have a wild and crazy sheep in love with thorns and brambles. But please don’t get tired of looking for me! I know You won’t. For You have found me. All I have to do is stay found.” (Thomas Merton, in *Seeing with the Heart*, p. 76).

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- Pray with Caravaggio’s *Calling of St. Matthew* painting. What thoughts or feelings or desires emerge? How are you caught between getting up and following Jesus and holding on too tightly to what might hold you back? Where or how do you experience freedom and unfreedom in your life?
 - Who are the people in your life who are free? What qualities define them?
 - Pray with your hands, alternating between a clenched fist and open palms. What disordered attachments are you clinging to? What do you need to let go of? What hopes do you have in a posture of openness and availability?
 - Pray with Rembrandt’s *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. How does the painting and the parable speak to you? Whom do you relate to more: the younger or older brother? Where is there room for more festivity in your life?
 - Pray with Caravaggio’s *Conversion of Saint Paul*. Consider a moment in your life when you were “knocked off your horse.” What did God teach you in this moment? How was your heart broken open and perspective expanded?
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Luke 15: 11-32 (Parable of the Prodigal Son)

Then [Jesus] said, "A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them.

After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need.

So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' "

So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began.

Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. 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.' "