

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

September 15, 2019 • 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Luke 15:1-32

The Story of the Prodigal Son

When the scribes and Pharisees chastise Jesus for associating with sinners, Jesus tells them a parable about a rich young man who takes his inheritance and squanders it. When he returns home to beg for mercy, his father greets him with love and forgiveness. Jesus is telling us about the unconditional love of God our Father. “But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him” (v. 20).

I know I affirmed my children when they were growing up, but I wish I had done it more often. In hindsight, I realize I got so caught up in the tremendous responsibilities of parenting that sometimes I missed what they needed most. Helping five youngsters grow up to be healthy—physically, emotionally and spiritually—is an awesome task. There were so many things to teach them and to protect them from. Too often, my conversations with them were not conversations at all; rather they were more like sermons with me preaching, teaching or warning against some danger or other.

One of the traits of a strong family is that its members affirm each other often. They congratulate one another on their achievements. They are quick to say “good job” or “well done.” Even more important, they affirm each individual not just for what he or she does, but for who he or she is. It is our job as parents to model this love and affirmation, so our children learn to compliment each other and us, too.

We do this by offering gentle hugs and unequivocal compliments—words or actions that let our toddler or teen or young adult know they are loved no matter what. This does not mean we stop teaching or even preaching. It does mean we take care

in what we say and how we say it. It also means we spend time each day listening to our children, affirming them and assuring them that they are loved. In short, we are asked to reflect God’s unconditional love to our children.

Mirroring that love can be a difficult task if we do not first accept God’s unconditional love for us. We need to remind ourselves that we, too, are God’s children, loved with a love that is unearned and unending.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Have family members write or draw one or two things they most like in each of the other family members. Show what you have each written or drawn.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Do you find it difficult to believe that God loves you unconditionally? Why or why not? How can you bring yourself to trust more deeply in God’s love?