From the Desk of Fr. Leo

Jesus' parables are so drawn from experiences in life that the fictional characters in them seem to be real people. Perhaps most realistic is the prodigal son. This story illustrates for us the meaning of the sacrament of Penance. Lent is a particularly appropriate season to celebrate the sacrament of penance., especially during one of he penance services before Easter.

In this weekend's Gospel, we see in St. Luke's, how happy the father was when his prodigal son returned home. The fact that the father insisted on an elaborate banquet to celebrate the return of his lost son should encourage us to prepare for the celebration of the sacrament of penance with confidence in God's mercy. God our Father eagerly wishes to celebrate our repentance.

The young son's repentance is our model. After having squandered his inheritance, he came to his senses. He abandoned his dissolute way of living and resolved to return to his father. He prepared to confess his sins and to make an act of contrition. Before asking to be forgiven, he resolved to change his life,

In an earlier era of the Church, people confessed their sins to the bishop on Ash Wednesday. Sackcloth was given them to wear, ashes were sprinkled on their heads, and their names were entered in the book of penitents. The bishop assigned a penance which was to be performed during the entire season of Lent. This penance was medicinal rather than punitive. It was a way of bringing about a cure for the disease of sin rather than a form of punishment for a crime. That is the spirit of of the prodigal's father.

The penance was suited to the sin. If people had been selfish and greedy, they were required to distribute alms to the poor. If they had been guilty of self-indulgence, they were directed to fast and abstain from choice foods. If hey had been negligent of God, they were given a regimen of prayer. The purpose of the penance was to effect a change of heart. In a special ceremony on Holy Thursday morning the penitents received absolution from the bishop and that evening they participated in the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper.

In our times we have inverted the order of the sacrament. We confess our sins, receive absolution, and then only later do we perform our penance. From the earlier practice of the Church, we can learn an important lesson, that we should not wait until we go to confession and receive an official penance from the priest. We ought to practice penance long before we approach the priest. In other words, we ought to be working during the entire season of Lent to change our lives.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**February 4**	**11:00AM**
Linda Benish		Buenaflor-Roth Family
Wed.	**February 5**	**11:00AM**
Bonifacio Deloviar †		Combong Family
Thur.	**February 6**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Fri.	**February 7**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Sat.	**February 8**	**4:30PM**
Stella Noe		Andrea Delsid
Sun.	**February 9**	**9:00AM**
Raymond Charvez Sr. †		Jennifer & Emily
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		

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