



Father Danny Murphy is a retired Pastor from Brooklyn NY. A gifted man with a God given talent to inspire and God's gift to us at Holy Cross Church in Vero Beach Florida. This is just one of his inspirational homilies.

Fr. Danny Murphy – 24th Sunday of the Year 2016

Before we begin, allow me to share a little reflection on September 11. In recounting the many events of that day, the one that gives me the most goosebumps is the fact that every single phone call made by the victims contained the same message: "I Love You." Some messages were shouted, others were whispered but the lesson each of us can take from this that we should express love and affection for each other both soon and frequently.

You have to be 110 years old to remember the romantic tidbit from Elizabeth Barret

Browning: "How do I love thee, let me count the ways..." Centuries after St. Luke, I think the three parables in today's Gospel, the Lost sheep, lost coin and lost son, in three ways,

gently and powerfully reveal how God loves us: personally, unconditionally and joyfully

Personally Even if I were the only person, Jesus would have died on the cross just for me.

Just as the shepherd left the 99 sheep to go after the one that was lost, so too Jesus would

leave the 99 to go after me! If he knows each of the stars, he certainly knows my name. He knows what I need even before I ask for it. Not a hair falls from my head that he doesn't know about it. He knit me in my mother's womb and so God knows and loves me personally

Unconditionally I believe that the first thing Jesus did after he rose from the dead was to embrace Judas in heaven. God loves us unconditionally. We live in a different era, a different culture, so it is difficult for us to grasp the enormity of the story of the Prodigal Son. The son says to the father "You're living too long! I'm not waiting for my inheritance; I want it now!" So he takes that inheritance and leaves town to go to a distant country far away from his father, and family, far from his religion and his roots. How hurtful for his father. He tended swine which is "verboten" for the Jews. Yet we read that the father keeps vigil, keeps looking out for his son. One day he sees his son at a distance away both geographically and in his heart. The father runs to greet him with a kiss, a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Unconditional love, the same kind of love that God has for us. When I still have the smell of swine on me, God still embraces me. The son didn't return because he was sorry, he returned because he was HUNGRY. See if you agree that God doesn't love us because we are sorry, we are SORRY because God loves us! When the son experienced his father's love, only then was he sorry. We read in the first letter of John:

"Love consists in this not that we love God but that God loves us." And God loves us unconditionally!

Joyful Did you notice the common thread, the joy with which God forgives: The shepherd hoists the sheep he found up on his shoulders in joy and in jubilation. The woman calls all her friends to rejoice that she found the lost coin. The father throws a party to rejoice that the son has returned home. God loves us exuberantly! We are made in the image and likeness of God and so we try to imitate God because Jesus says: "love one another as I have loved you..." He loves us personally, unconditionally and joyfully and so we are to love others personally, unconditionally and joyfully because that's the way he loves us!