

Today, Jesus gives us the marvelous parable of the Prodigal Son. This story is pictured in Rembrandt's painting in the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg Russia. No one has seen God, So Jesus, well before Rembrandt, paints a vivid picture story to show the greatness of God's Love for the Prodigal Son who has screwed up his life and squandered his inheritance on prostitutes and irresponsible behaviour. And yet the Father forgives and embraces him in love.

That is the way we learn, through pictures and stories. So I am writing a book which may end up being titled:

"THE MAD CRAZY LOVE OF DOGS AND GOD!"

In the intro to this new book I write:

"Mainikon Eros"--"Wild Crazy Love"

The ultimate Thou we call God. Which interestingly is Dog spelled backwards. Spirituality moves us to search beyond for the mysterious entity we call God. Up close we also search through pictures and stained glass windows and stories. Even closer still, we can observe in our dogs' utter devotion to us a spark of what Mark Patrick Hedderman OSB, Abbot of Glenstal Abbey in Ireland, describes in Greek as: *Manikon Eros*:

"Mad Crazy Love"

Any one returning from afar to be greeted by the delirious, leaping, barking, encircling welcome of a dog will have some spark, some inkling of what God's "mad crazy love" for us must be like!"

Andrew Greeley, (God rest his soul) wrote in his fascinating book, ***"The Catholic Imagination"***: ... "There is a propensity among Catholics to take the objects and events of everyday life as hints of what God is like, in which God somehow lurks, even if (as perhaps is often the case) they are not completely self conscious about these perceptions of enchantment."

So, if you want a picture that beautifully depicts the welcome of the Father for the Prodigal Son, google Rembrandt's famous painting housed in the Hermitage.

If you want an image that gives a spark, gives a hint of the Father's love for you, from everyday life, observe a devoted dog welcoming his/her master upon a return from a journey. This is indeed an image of "mad, crazy love." It is a dance of complete joy, devotion, loyalty and welcome.....and rejoice that it is a hint of God's love for you and me!

There is an old Gaelic Blessing which describes this kind of mad love that inspires the dog's dance, and ours':

"Dance as though no one is watching you!

Love, as though you have never loved before!

Sing as though no one can hear you!

Live, as though Heaven is on earth!"

BREAKFAST QUESTION; What do you think of Greeley's statement: "the events of everyday can be hints of God...?"

PERSONAL REFLECTION: When have you felt like the Prodigal Son?