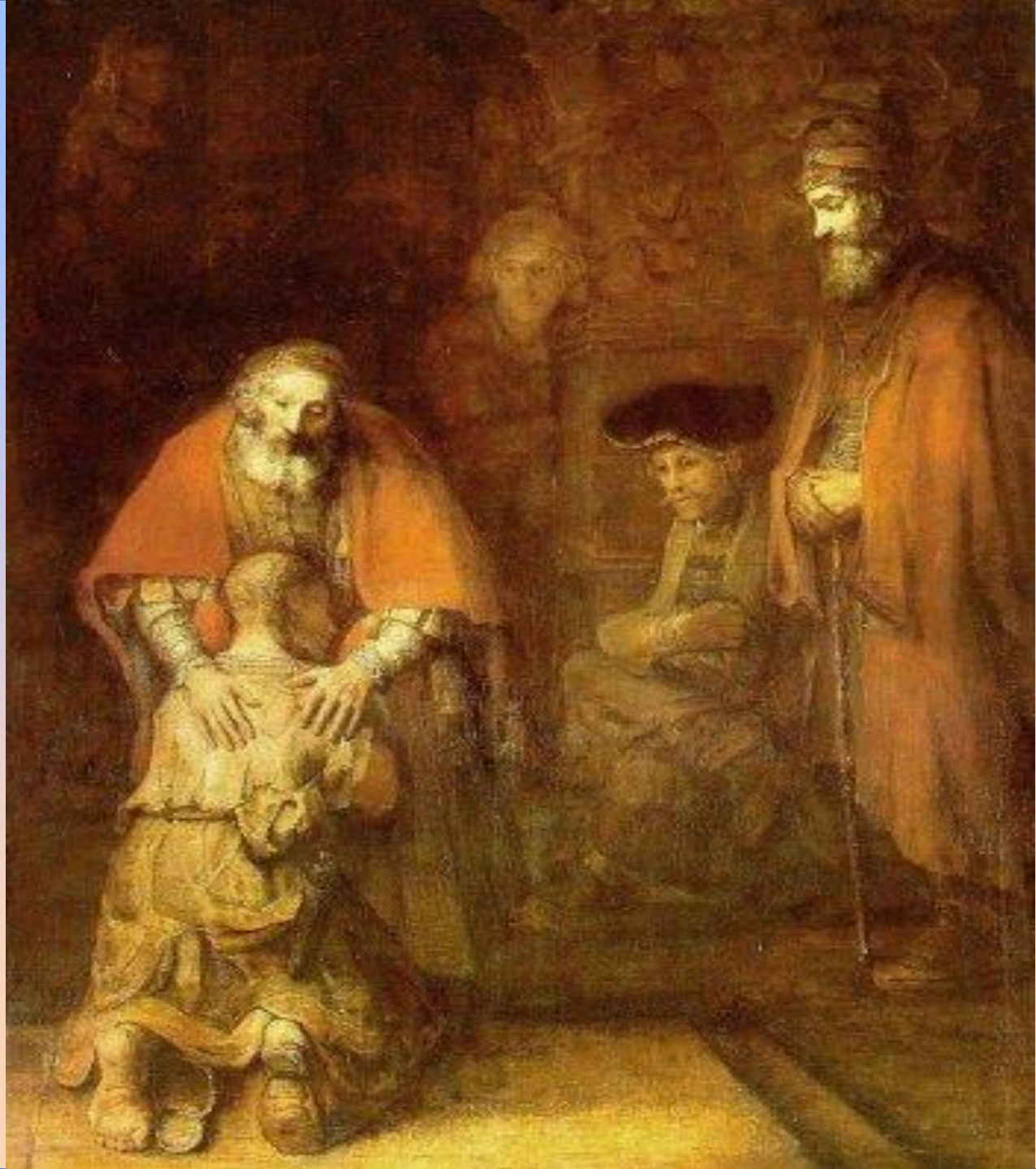


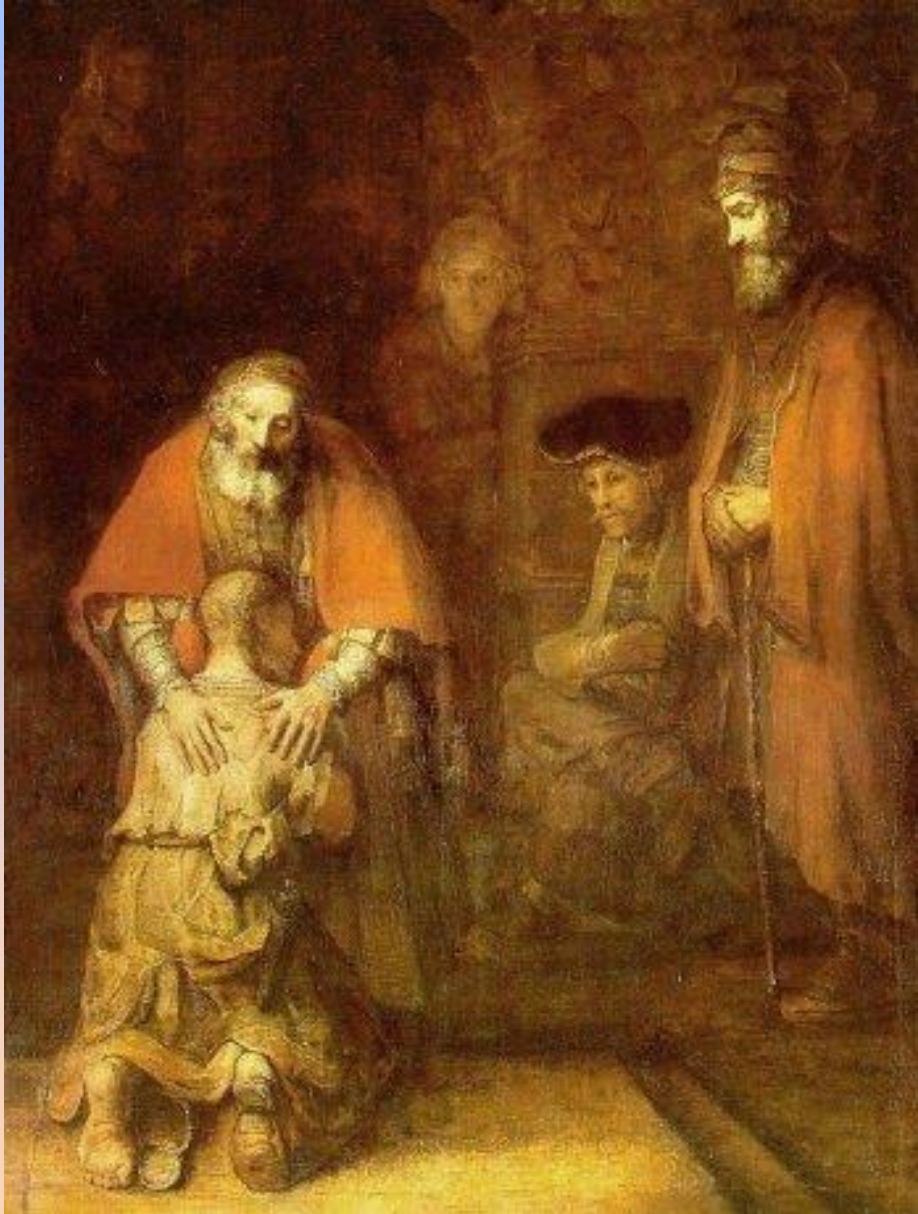
CLC European Assembly

*March 3*

# Morning Prayer



Then he said, 'There was a [man](#) who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that [will](#) come to me." So the father divided the [property](#) between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a [life](#) of debauchery. 'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch; so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled himself with the husks the pigs were eating but no one would let him have them. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's hired men have all the food they want and more, and here am I dying of hunger!! [will](#) leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against [heaven](#) and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired men." So he left the place and went back to his father. 'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against [heaven](#) and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we [will](#) celebrate by having a feast because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate. Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. The servant told him, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the calf we had been fattening because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out and began to urge him to come in; but he retorted to his father, "All these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your [property](#) -- he and his loose women -- you kill the calf we had been fattening." The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only [right](#) we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found." '



**The painting represents the spiritual homecoming of all of humankind.**

**The prodigal child is being welcomed by his father.**

**To one side the elder brother looks on and in the background are other unknown figures who, like ourselves, contemplate the scene.**

**As you enter into the contemplation of this picture in your prayer, consider which person you identify with most closely.**

**How do you feel about each character? Which one most resembles your own feelings at this time.**



**The son, resting against the father's breast... he is dressed in rags...**

**...he had left home with much pride and money,. He returns with nothing. Even his head has been shaven - like that of a common prisoner...**

**The soles of his feet tell the story of a long and humiliating journey. The left foot slipped out of its worn sandal, is scarred. The right foot, only partially covered by a broken sandal, also speaks of suffering and misery.**





**Focus on the Father now...**

**We are drawn by the intimacy between the two figures. The son leaning his head against his father's chest.**

**But it is the old man's hands, as they touch the boy's shoulders, that reach us in a place where we perhaps have never before been reached.**

**The true centre of Rembrandt's painting is the hands of the father... in them, mercy becomes flesh; upon them, forgiveness, reconciliation and healing come together.**



**Standing in the background is the elder son.**

**Less confident, and suspicious of such prodigal love displayed by his aging father.**

**His face betrays feelings of puzzlement mixed with bitterness and contempt...he is angry...deep down he too desires his father's love!**

**We can all empathize with the older brother's feelings. In our minds, we may find it totally unacceptable that the father would not only receive the younger son back, but would do so with such celebration.**

**"Whether you are the younger son or the older son, you have to realize that you are called to become the father - look at the father in the painting and you will know who you are called to be." Isn't that the real question for us as well?.**



**Do we want to be like the father?**



**Do we want to be not just the one who is being forgiven, but also the one who forgives?**

**Not just the one who is welcomed home, but also the one who welcomes others home; not just the one who receives compassion, but the one who offers to others the same compassion that he has offered to us.**



**The return to the Father is ultimately the challenge to become the Father.**





