

The Matins and Vespers texts for the third week of Great Lent include a return to the Pig-pen, a living flashback to the Parable of the Prodigal Son. We are not reminding ourselves that we read this parable a few weeks ago; rather, we are reminding ourselves that we are still the Son (all of us, men and women) who have wished our father dead (for that is how we receive inheritance), taken our share of the wealth of our Father's estate, squandered it in loose and riotous living, attached ourselves by work to a most vile boss in a most vile line of work, and longed to eat from the slop with which we must feed the pigs.

Have we come to our senses yet?

Have we turned back towards home?

This is repentance: to change our heart and our mind (*metanoia*, the Greek word for repentance—and for prostration, by the way), and our direction (which comes from the Greek *epistrepho*—to turn around—as we hear in Ezekiel, quoted in our Precommunion prayers, “for God desires not the death of a sinner, but that he should
turn
from his wickedness, and live!”

So, repentance can be summed up in this sentence: “This is crazy! I have to get out of here!”

And both facets are important, both related to the Prodigal—to come to ourselves (“This is crazy!”) and to return to the father, to go home (“I have to get out of here!”)

May the Lord spurn us on to recognize the craziness of the sinful life in the pigpen, and grant us a speedy and vivid memory of home, that we might come to ourselves and flee back to the Father.

When I was honored with sonship, I foolishly misunderstood my gracious father.

I deprived myself of glory, the riches of grace. I squandered myself in evil;

Deprived of divine food, I joined an evil stranger.

By him I was sent to his soul-corrupting pen. There I lived blindly, tending the senseless beasts,

Thriving on pleasures that never satisfy.

But returning now, I will cry to the compassionate and bountiful father:

I have sinned before heaven and before you! Have mercy on me.

--Matins Aposticha, Wednesday of the Third Week of Great Lent