

**Donnybrook**  
12th of April 2022

## **Welcome**

When Saint Augustine wrote his biography he called it the confessions. He did not mean first of all confession of sin. He meant first of all confession of praise of God and within that praise of God he told his story. As we know, his story was one of conversion, a journey home to God. The instinct to combine praise and acknowledgement of sin is a healthy one. At first confessions in a parish, for example, the youngsters bring a page with a drawing on each side. One side shows the good things they did. And the other side shows where they failed, asking for God's grace and forgiveness.

## **Topic**

It is a great gift to be able to know ourselves well. It is not given to everyone and sometimes we arrive at it through difficulties. A good example is the Prodigal son: at his lowest point, he came to himself.

## **Steps**

Knowing myself can be something of a challenge because all of us occupy different roles and at times different masks in our lives. Of course, when it comes to God there is no need for any pretence. God knows us through and through and his knowledge of us is merciful and compassionate. His desire is that we should be whole, wholesome and holy.

Our gospel today indicates a very practical path towards self knowledge. We are invited to learn about ourselves by the way we treat other people in our lives. It is important to remember that this includes everybody I encounter in the course of my ordinary day. Including the people most important to me, the people I work with, the friends I meet, the casual encounters in the course of a day. The question to ask is: was each person the better for meeting me.

The great Anglican Archbishop Temple once raised the question: what is the relationship between prayer and action. He wrote: it is not that action is more important and a prayer helps – almost as if prayer was a kind of petrol to keep us going on the goodness Trail. Instead the archbishop wrote: prayer is most important and action is its test. We know how we are on a spiritual level more by observation than by introspection. This is the teaching of tonight's gospel.

## **Conclusion**

So this evening, we are invited to look at ourselves through the mirror of how we treat other people. We can follow the good example of Saint Augustine and acknowledge in gratitude the relationships which are going well, where grace has been effective. We can also follow his example and notice the times where we need forgiveness and healing. As he famously wrote: you have made us for yourself all Lord and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.