

My dear friends, I am both honored and humbled to be with you today. I am honored, because you are among God's chosen ones! You have special gifts and special needs, and for you and your families God has special blessings. I am humbled because you give more to me than I can ever give to you! You give to me the face of Christ!

In today's gospel proclamation we hear the familiar story of the prodigal son. This son thought he did not need his father or his family. He went away from them. He was too proud and too stubborn in his heart. But when times got difficult he remembered his father, his family, and the house where grew up. He felt badly because he had run away from them. He longed to see them again, and to be with them face to face. This is the moment when the young man "wakes up," and realizes that he needs his father once again! And so he begins the journey home with a few steps. But long before he gets home his father sees him, and runs to him, and kisses him, and embraces him! How much the father wanted to see the face of his sone once more! How powerful is this moment! The father orders that a beautiful garment be placed over the son's shoulders, and that rings be put on his fingers and shoes on his feet. The father was so happy to see the face of his son once more that he give back to his son all the dignity he had lost by running away!

My friends. I long to see the face of Christ! I need to see the face of Christ! And to me, you are the face of Christ!!! So thank you, thank

you, thank you! Just as the father threw a big party for his son, so I feel a spirit of joy and happiness in my heart by being with you today!

St. Paul says that whoever is in Christ is a new creation! Brothers and sisters, you are a new creation for me! May God continue blessing you and working through you to show His face to many, many people. Amen.