***2 28 16***

***THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK***

***“And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.”***

 On this Sunday of the Prodigal Son the Lord’s Holy Church invites us to return home. Many of us have been living far, far away from our true home. We live in constant danger and conflict. We squander the precious gifts which our Lord has given to us. We somehow think we are living well, but that is only because we cannot see our true condition. We suppress our anxieties and fears, and we strive furiously to gain earthly gifts; and yet in a moment they will disappear as vapor. We spend so much time on our fleeting physical health and yet our eternal souls are starving to the point of death. Deep down, we know that we are in a foreign and strange land but we do not have the energy nor the desire to get up and go home. We do not know the way. How can we get home? The good news, beloved, is that every year, the Church shows us the way. We, indeed, do have a direct route home. Great and Holy Lent is upon us and it will give us the strength and the energy to get up and get moving. We can return to a place where everything is in order, where there is peace and safety, where everything has been appointed with beauty and where the atmosphere is warm and full of love. We must only start out on the road and keep our destination in mind.

 And as we are traveling, even though we are still a long way off- “yet at a distance”, our Father who sees the intentions of the heart will come running toward us. He will bind our wounds and put the best robe on us. He will feed our hunger with his very being- with Himself. It is interesting that in the Orthodox Church this parable is called by the Fathers “The Parable of the Compassionate Father” as often as it is called “The Parable of the Prodigal Son.” Our Lord, only desires one thing for us-that we come to Him so that He can make us whole again. He will never abandon us or reject us-if we come to Him with a loving heart. A heart that desires to be with Him, to please and honor Him, and to once again become His sons and daughters. It is in our words and our deeds that we truly become His children. His deepest desire is to embrace us and kiss us that we may share in the incomparable beauty of His Love. This is the meaning of the great and Holy Season that is before us.