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-- It's natural for adolescents to think that they know better than their parents. In fact, it's almost instinct on their part. It's also common experience for those same people, ten or so years later, to admit their parents were actually wiser than they thought they were at the time.

-- Part and parcel of being an adolescent is challenging authority. I was one in the late 60's and at least some (though not all) of the tumult of that time among youth could be attributed to that.

-- It's important to remember that this gospel passage I just read comes right after some religious leaders had challenged Jesus' authority. He had countered by asking them about whether John's baptism was authentic.

-- They refused to answer that question, because they had not responded to John's call to repentance—they didn't think they needed it. But many of the "common people" had.

-- So Jesus tells this story. And the first son reminds you of the typical adolescent of today. He has that rebellious streak. But the father is patient with him. He doesn't kick him out of the house. He allows him to stew. And he doesn't shield him from the consequences of his rebellious behavior.

-- Eventually, the boy sees the wisdom of his father's wishes and comes around. Not all will do this—that is the risk the father takes.

-- God deals with us in the same way. Each of us has that tendency to think we know better than God (original sin). God's law tells us to do something difficult (or to avoid something that appears good to us) and we rebel.

-- Rather than strike us down right away, God is patient. God allows us to learn our lesson. God invites us to come back and see the wisdom of his words.

-- Of course, there are also some of us who put on a pious face and say *Yes, Sir* but then ignore God's commands. People can put on a good religious show during the weekend and then treat people like trash the rest of the week.

-- God sees through that. Yet God invites even those people to turn around their lives. As the prophet Ezekiel says, whoever turns from his wickedness to do what is right and just will preserve his life.

-- This is an ongoing battle within each and every one of us. We never completely lose that adolescent tendency to rebel against one part or another of God's word.

-- Our Lord is patient. He allows us time to reflect on what we are doing and to see the wisdom of his ways. Like a good parent he gives us that space, even to the point of allowing us to suffer the painful consequences of our rebellion.

-- Yet, as long as we live here on earth, God does not abandon us. God gives us time and space to turn around. Through his Church he offers us the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a means to come back to him.

-- God's word challenges us to answer the call to continuing conversion of mind and heart. God calls us to an integrity of life where what we do, especially to the people around us, matches what we say we believe.

-- May we open our hearts to God's call to conversion of mind and heart. In doing so, we will discover the true wisdom of our heavenly Father.