Coming Home…

I have always loved *The Parable of the Prodigal Son* and have always thought that it should have been renamed *The Parable of the Loving Father*. For the focus is really of the grace of the Father who forgives, restores, heals and redeems. (The parable is found in the Gospel of Luke chapter 15 verses 11-24.) For years Rembrandt’s painting of *The Return of the Prodigal* has captivated me. He captures the dynamics, the many emotions of this moment in this image.

In this journey of life, we often, wander. We get lost and distracted. We waste our lives and resources on things that are not eternal. We squander our time. We rebel and want to do it our way. This leads to a life run by things and in the end, when we have our own way we grow hard, callous and empty.

Just maybe we get a chance by grace to see a different destination, we recall what life is really all about and we begin a journey home. For some who have wandered far and wide it is a long journey but regardless of the length we take the first step back to a place called home.

In the course of this earthly pilgrimage Canterbury becomes a temporary home for many – a place of refreshment, provision, reconciliation and even a celebration! People who enter the Canterbury campus get to glimpse ever so lightly the reality of God’s Kingdom and see a way of life that is filled with purpose, meaning and peace. Through kindness, mercy and love we discover our true home where we are comforted deep into our very being with the affirmation of a Father who loves us.

We are all pilgrims traversing this life, we are exiles in a foreign land anchored in hope for coming Kingdom of Christ. Canterbury you get to taste and see, getting a glimpse of the ultimate destination of life, a landscape of utter delight.

The Rev. Jon Davis PhD
Executive Director
A Canterbury Tale – Jim Morical / Director of Operations
Life is a journey and full of surprises as I reflect on how I came to be the Director of Operations at Canterbury. Last month, we celebrated the five year anniversary of the calling of our family accepted to move onto the campus of Canterbury as we left the cold weather of Minnesota. It has been a blessing to live and work in Oviedo and to serve in this community.

When my wife, The Rev. Robin Morical, accepted the call from Father Jon to be his Associate Priest, I was not even thinking about a career change. We moved our family to Florida as I continued to work remotely for a software company in Minnesota. Shortly after moving, the down turn in economy forced the company to make several employee cuts and I was one of them. Unemployed and looking to stay in sales, I was approached by Father Jon to consider a career change and become the Director of Operations. As a cradle Episcopalian and a desire for ministry, I had contemplated a call to ordained ministry but that was not my vocation. I believe he was leading me to serve in the area of hospitality and open the door at Canterbury to answer that prayer. I gladly accepted and with excitement began to serve in this capacity. This area of responsibility involved all aspects of the operation of this sacred place, serving all our guests with Christian hospitality, for the advancement of God’s kingdom through various Canterbury Moments. What an honor to serve on this 48-acre estate that is reflective, secluded, peaceful, helping us connect with Christ.

Canterbury is all about going deeper in our understanding and communion with the Lord. Our facilities are designed with space and necessities for professional meetings in a secluded wilderness. The trail around the lake, the woods, docks and outdoor sitting areas offer a distraction-free landscape for reflection. Our goal is to offer a place conducive to growing in a deeper commitment to Christ.

Hospitality is a spiritual gift and this is a part of my calling. When my wife accepted the call to serve at Canterbury, it wasn’t just for her but for us as a family. The Lord has a purpose and direction, we discovered that afresh here at Canterbury. My prayer is gratitude to The Lord for the privilege to serve Him, His people and His creation in the sacred space called Canterbury. Amen.

A Prayer for the Mission and Ministry of Canterbury Retreat and Conference Center:
Almighty God, bless Canterbury Retreat and Conference Center; make it a lively center for sound learning and in the course of this busy life, a place of spiritual renewal, refreshment and peace. Give wisdom to the Board and Staff; to make wise decisions, to be good stewards of all resources. Lead us we pray to strength and stability. Inspire us by your Holy Spirit with a vision for greater mission and effectiveness for the expansion of your Kingdom in this diocese and beyond; that people would come to know you as Lord and Savior; grow in their knowledge of you by the work done here. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ who modeled for us the need for retreat to be strengthened and renewed. Amen.