

*The Return of the Prodigal Son*, by Marie Romero Cash

art selection and comment by [John Kohan](#) in the [October 7, 2020](#) issue



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In our time of social distancing, this carved wood sculpture of the return of the prodigal son by Marie Romero Cash reminds us what it means to hold and to be held. A native of New Mexico, Cash works with natural pigments and local woods like pinyon pine to make her folk art pieces, keeping alive the traditions of the Hispanic “saint-makers” who once crafted simply styled holy images for outlying communities in what is now the American Southwest, at a time when religious artifacts from Mexico were in short supply. The father from the parable lifts his eyes toward heaven in gratitude for the return of his wayward son, now safely at rest in his arms. The father’s features and kneeling pose evoke imagery of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, praying for the will of God to be done. Says Cash, “It hurts not to be

able to reach out and touch a loved one, especially if you live alone. You feel like an orphan with no one but yourself to navigate through days that run together. In this sculpture, the son is back in an embrace he has missed for so long.”