

“THIS SON OF MINE WAS DEAD,
AND HAS COME TO LIFE AGAIN;
HE WAS LOST, AND HAS BEEN FOUND.”

LUKE 15:24

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
MARCH 27, 2022

Lost And Found

The parable of the father and his sons is one of the most familiar of all of Jesus' stories. The father in the parable is lavish in forgiveness and revels in the return of his young son, who was lost and now is found. The older son is also lost—lost in his refusal to forgive, lost in his failure to grasp his father's generous spirit. The Israelites spent many years lost in the desert, seeking the land of milk and honey, yet often failing to seek the God who delivered and fed them. We are sometimes lost as well. We lose sight of the Lord and the Lord's ways. God never loses sight of us, however. God waits, ready for us to come to our senses, ready to welcome us back with open arms.

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Saints and Special Observances

Sunday: Fourth Sunday of Lent
Friday: First Friday; Abstinence;
April Fool's Day
Saturday: St. Francis of Paola; First Saturday

Readings for the Week

Monday: Is 65:17-21; Ps 30:2, 4-6, 11-13b;
Jn 4:43-54
Tuesday: Ez 47:1-9, 12; Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9;
Jn 5:1-16
Wednesday: Is 49:8-15; Ps 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18;
Jn 5:17-30
Thursday: Ex 32:7-14; Ps 106:19-23; Jn 5:31-47
Friday: Wis 2:1a, 12-22; Ps 34:17-21, 23;
Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30
Saturday: Jer 11:18-20; Ps 7:2-3, 9bc-12;
Jn 7:40-53
Sunday: Is 43:16-21; Ps 126:1-6; Phil 3:8-14;
Jn 8:1-11;
Alternate readings (Year A):
Ez 37:12-14; Ps 130:1-8; Rom 8:8-11;
Jn 11:1-45 [3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45]



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Today's Readings

First Reading — God's people enter the promised land, observe the Passover, and eat of the produce of the land (Joshua 5:9a, 10-12) or 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a.

Psalm — Taste and see the goodness of the Lord (Psalm 34) or Psalm 23.

Second Reading — We are now ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-21) or Ephesians 5:8-14.

Gospel — We must rejoice when our brother who was dead in sin repents and comes back to life (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32) or John 9:1-41 [1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38].

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Prayer Of The Week

Fourth Sunday of Lent
O God, who through your Word
reconcile the human race to yourself in a
wonderful way,
grant, we pray,
that with prompt devotion and eager faith
the Christian people may hasten
toward the solemn celebrations to come.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Reflection question:

How am I preparing myself for the celebrations of Holy Week? Is there more that I can do?

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Treasures From Our Tradition

Today, "Laetare Sunday," breaks the somberness of Lent for a little rejoicing, and the readings all summon us to an awareness of reconciliation. One of the best-loved stories of our tradition is today's Gospel story of the runaway son and the prodigal father. Prodigal, of course, is an adjective meaning "spendthrift or extravagant to a degree bordering on recklessness," and although the boy maxes out the credit cards, it is really the father who is prodigal with forgiveness.

Part of the excitement of this Laetare Sunday is rooted in the ancient catechumenate. Long ago, midway through Lent, the "elect" were focusing more and more on the gift of reconciliation accomplished for them by Christ and about to be realized in the Easter sacraments they were preparing to celebrate. In some places, the elect were even bedecked with roses on this day. A person bedecked with roses sticks out in a crowd; a person formed by the Eucharist and committed to living a life of reconciliation does, too. That's you!

—James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Arm the Photon Torpedoes

Usually the first reading is picked to go with the Gospel. This week the connection appears to be a feast. The book of Joshua tells of the Israelites coming into the Promised Land, where they no longer needed to be fed with manna as in the desert. They had been wandering much longer than expected because of their unfaithfulness. But now they are forgiven, and so celebrate the Passover with food from the land. Then we hear the Gospel parable about another feast. This one is also a celebration of forgiveness, for the prodigal son has returned to his father, and the father's forgiveness shows us how willing God is to forgive us. That's where we end the parable, right?

Wrong. The parable continues with the older son's complaint about a feast for his brother. Did you notice the words of the father that "everything I have is yours" (Luke 15:31)? He's not just being sentimental because they are family. The younger brother had already taken his inheritance, so whatever was left will one day go to the older one.

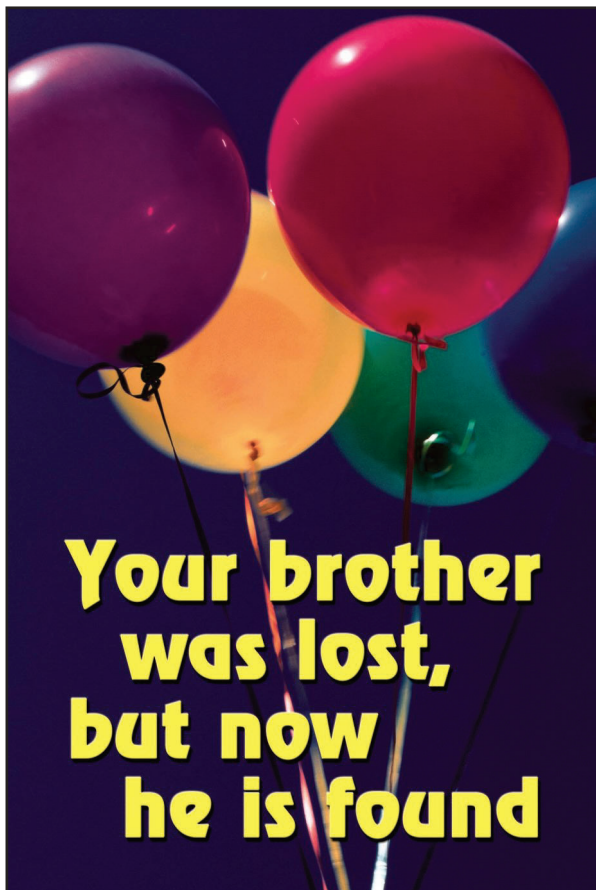
That son cannot forgive his brother and is angry at the father for welcoming the prodigal back. This is where we come in.

Most of us have no trouble asking God's forgiveness. But we may have trouble forgiving others. We are so used to thinking in terms of justice that we are not satisfied with forgiveness. When I have been hurt, I feel like hitting back. When you see an action movie, you don't want the bad guy to give up and say he's sorry--you expect him to be destroyed by the good guy, hopefully in a big fight or a spectacular explosion. (Superheroes, however, almost never kill the bad guy.)

So we have to ask ourselves whose idea of justice we live by. Is it the human expectation of an eye for an eye? Or is it God's justice, which is mercy and forgiveness? When someone cuts you off in traffic, do you feel like firing the photon torpedoes, or offering forgiveness? The Golden Rule could be "Forgive others as you would be forgiven." Jesus gave his life for the sins of the world.

Do we have the right to ask for more

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God's Word for Children



Fourth Sunday of Lent

Jesus told a story about a young man who left his father's house (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32). He foolishly spent all his money, until he had no food and only the clothes on his back. He returned home, hoping his father would hire him as a worker. But his father forgave him and lovingly welcomed his son back! Follow the letter trail from the son to the overjoyed father. Highlight a word that appears five times in the trail.

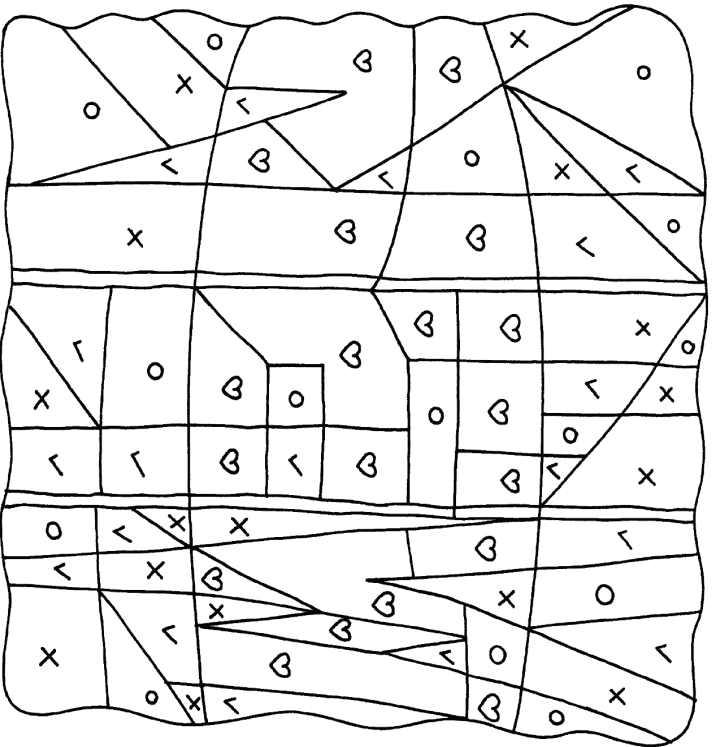


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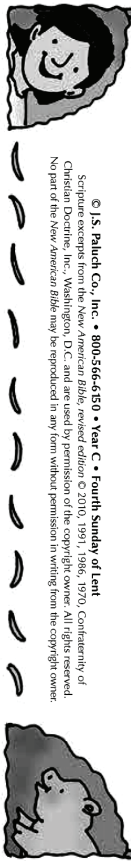
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Jesus came to show people a new way to live. When our hearts are filled with God's love, it changes our thoughts and actions. We become different—kinder, more loving and trusting. Color only the spaces below that have a heart. They will show what we become because Jesus loves us.



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“He was lost and has been found”
 Luke 15 : 32



CATHOLIC CORNER

LENTEN COMPANIONS: SIMON, VERONICA, THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM

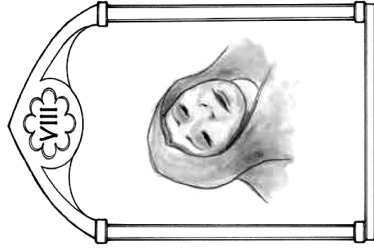
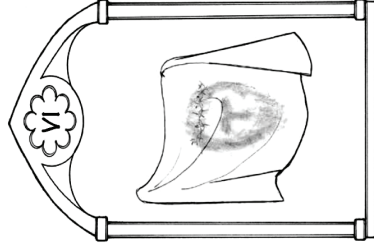
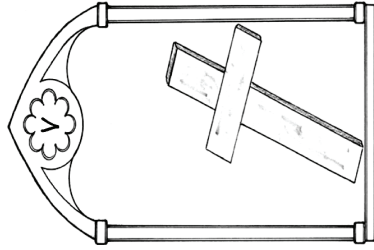
3 weeks to Easter: We travel with Simon, Veronica, and the women of Jerusalem.

Today is called Laetare Sunday. *Laetare* is Latin for “Rejoice.” The entrance antiphon at the beginning of today’s Mass (from Isaiah 66:10) begins, “Rejoice, Jerusalem.” Lent is half over and we have reason to have hope and rejoice.

Good friends are important. Friends who help us, who stand with us, make hard times easier. The story of Jesus’ suffering includes people who helped him. When Jesus was weak and stumbling under the weight of the cross, Simon of Cyrene helped him carry it. Veronica wiped his weary face with her veil. Some women keeping watch along the road wept when they saw Jesus. He felt their love and support and tried to comfort them even in his own suffering. All of these helpers are remembered in the Stations of the Cross: Simon (station 5), Veronica (station 6), and the Women of Jerusalem (station 8).

How can these people be our companions? When we see our friends in need, we can try to be like Simon and help carry their burdens. We can be like Veronica and make them feel better or more comfortable. We can be like the women of Jerusalem: even if we can’t make our friends’ troubles disappear, we can share their burden of sorrow so they know they are not alone.

One day this week, make a visit to church and find these three stations.
 Stand before each one and say a prayer. Think of friends who need your help today.





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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

MARCH 27, 2022

BE TRANSFORMED

Who knew that when Moses led the Israelites out of slavery it would mean forty years of wandering in the desert before they were able to enter the Promised Land? Many of us experience periods of wandering in our life. Perhaps we made some poor judgment calls in our younger days, or maybe as adult children we returned home to live because of struggling with substance abuse, or unemployment, or a divorce. Or maybe we fell away from Church for a bit. This is nothing new. The second reading calls us to be new creations in Christ, to put away our old selves, to be transformed; and in the Gospel we hear the beautiful story of the Prodigal Son. Each of these calls for us to move, and grow, and leave old ways behind.

TESTING THE BOUNDARIES

Some of the first words a two-year-old might say are “Do by self!” It is almost a rite of passage for teenagers to test their parents as much as they can. Every parent who ever lay awake in bed at night waiting to hear the sound of the child pulling the car into the garage or opening the door knows at least as much about praying vigils as any nun in a convent. This is a deep and earnest prayer, and the parents can barely breathe until their child comes home. Usually when we think of the story of the Prodigal Son, we think of the feeling of guilt the son had as he realized how much he had messed things up, or we feel the injustice that the older brother felt, because he wasn’t the rebel child leaving the home.

WELCOME HOME

What we don’t often remember in the story of the Prodigal Son is that God is there welcoming, urging us on. A few years ago there was a funeral for a young man who died of a drug overdose within days of coming out of a treatment center. Many of his young friends came but expected fire and brimstone, and to be told what a bad child that boy was. Instead, the priest preached about God loving this child so much that perhaps the only way God could protect him was to bring him home. That gentle image of God welcoming him with open arms soothed the broken hearts and unspoken questions that were on many minds. Not every situation is that drastic, but God is calling us home this Lent no matter what mistakes we’ve made, or how many times we have made them.

TODAY’S READINGS

Joshua 5:9a, 10–12
Psalm 34:2–3, 4–5, 6–7
2 Corinthians 5:17–21
Luke 15:1–3, 11–32

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