

Theme of the Week - The Prodigal Son

Is this one of the most recognisable Gospel readings? Obviously we hear and witness the Passion and Resurrection of Christ every time we go to Mass. For certain celebrations like Christmas, Easter and Feast Days like St Peter and Paul, we hear from a certain passage of the Gospel. But if we were to ask people what story does Jesus tell us that we most remember, would it be this? Maybe not, but it is for me! And what is Jesus trying to teach us with this story? He wants us to know and understand that whatever we do wrong, we can always come back to God and ask for forgiveness. God is love and God is forgiveness and God will welcome us back with open arms like the father did.

In the Gospel, by asking for his inheritance, the younger son was offering a huge insult to his father; it was akin to wishing his father dead. And then for the son to be working with pigs, not only was he eating their meat which was prohibited at the time, but touching them would have rendered a person unclean as well. Jesus shows just how low the son had sunk and set the scene for the astonishingly lavish of forgiveness of the father. And why was this story so significant to the listeners at the time? The religious understanding was that there was no place in God's kingdom for sinners!

The Prodigal Son story gives us a graphic illustration of the radical new image of a God who is so forgiving, so good, so faithful and generous to his children. God so longs to be reconciled with us, that no limit is set on the celebration for the one who has been 'found'. The story reveals what is required of us if we are to 'be glad and celebrate' - we must realise that the source of rejoicing is in the goodness of God, 'Our Father'. We must take responsibility and acknowledge our failings and return to God. We must learn not to resent the good fortune of others who don't deserve it. The father's response to both sons is consistent - God never tires of seeking the lost and welcoming home for those who repent and return. The resentment of the older son to his father's generosity gives us a challenge; his refusal to participate in the family celebration shows a lack of compassion and a meanness of spirit which is quite at odds with his father's response. Try putting yourself into each of the characters of this story in turn. Which one most resembles you and your responses at this time? How can you show **love** to others before Easter to help those that may be lost? How can you show **Compassion** to others who may be in personal need? Easter is a time where God shows us His **Love** and **Compassion**: **Love** by the sending of His son but **compassion** by the forgiveness of our sins through His death and resurrection. This week can you reach out to someone who is lost with **Love** and also try and show **compassion** to someone through your forgiveness.

The Prodigal Son

Weekly Reflections
30th March 2025
4th Sunday of Lent



From the Gospel of Luke (15: 1-3, 11-32)

At that time: The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'

So he told them this parable: 'There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me." And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

'But when he came to himself, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.' "

'And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to celebrate.

'Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound." But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, "Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!" And he said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found." '

Prayer for the Week

Loving God,

We too are sometimes like the Prodigal Son in being more interested in our self-interests. Teach us to serve seeking no reward, to love without expecting it in return, to give without counting the cost. Allow us to offer ourselves in glad and joyful service
Through Christ our Lord
Amen

Day 1

Why was the son insulting his father by asking for his inheritance?
Why is this story so important to explaining what God not only gives us but wants from us?

Day 2

What son do you see yourself most in?
When have you felt forgiveness and how can you demonstrate **love** and **compassion** this Easter break?

Day 3

Each day three of each week in Lent will be given to pray the Stations of the Cross. This week please pray:
Station 13: Jesus dies on the Cross
Station 14: Jesus is laid in his tomb

Catholic Social Teaching - Solidarity

By coming together in hope as individuals, families, communities, organisations and nations, we can achieve transformative change for the common good. When we unite and make a stand for what we believe in, we can achieve remarkable things

"I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security...while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat' (Mark 6:37)." **Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 49**

How this half term can you promote Solidarity in all that you do in St Joseph's and society?