

this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants.” So he left the place and went back to his father.

“While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.” And they began to celebrate.

“Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. “Your brother has come” replied the servant “and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound.” He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, “Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening.”

“The father said, “My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.”

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

A SERVICE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL



Reproduction of this bulletin in any form prohibited. Published with ecclesiastical approval by ST PAULS PUBLICATIONS, PO Box 906, Strathfield NSW 2135. Tel 02 9394 3400 Fax 02 9746 1140. Scripture readings from the Jerusalem Bible, published and © 1966, by Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd and Doubleday & Co. Inc. are used by permission of the publishers. Psalm text from *The Psalms, A New Translation*, © 1963, The Grail (England), HarperCollins. New translation of the Order of Mass from *The Roman Missal* © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved. Artwork by Sr Dorothy Woodward rsj. Layout, commentaries and illustrations © St Pauls Publications, 2019. No 1765. Website: www.stpauls.com.au

Reflections on the Gospel

CELEBRATING THE MERCY OF GOD

Jesus tells the parable of the Lost Son as a defence against criticism of the welcome he gives ‘tax collectors (social outcasts) and sinners’ and his ‘eating with them’ — that is, his festive celebration with them of the mercy of God.

The parable powerfully depicts the dehumanisation of a young man who had callously requested his inheritance from his father and who subsequently squanders it. Reduced to wanting to eat what pigs eat – what could be worse for a Jew? – the young man ‘comes to his senses’. This may be a painful moment of growth in self-knowledge. It does not, however, represent much of a conversion: he remains calculating: ‘I can’t go back as a son. But at least if I get in as a servant, I’ll be clothed and fed’.

On his return, his father does not let him finish his prepared speech about coming back as a servant. Instead, overcome with compassion, he welcomes the boy and orders a big family celebration. Why? Because the son who was dead has come back to life; the lost one has been found.

The hostile reaction of the older brother is a key focus and challenge of the parable. We never in fact learn whether he goes in and shares in the music and dancing or whether he remains outside, locked in anger and resentment.

The parable seems to describe two kinds of sinfulness — and to suggest that one is much easier for God to deal with than the other? Is there perhaps a bit of both kinds in me?

Brendan Byrne, SJ

THE SAVING WORD

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT / C

31 MARCH 2019

FIRST READING

Josh 5:9-12

A reading from the book of Joshua

The people of God went to the promised land and there kept the passover.

The Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have taken the shame of Egypt away from you.”

The Israelites pitched their camp at Gilgal and kept the Passover there on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening in the plain of Jericho. On the morrow of the Passover they tasted the produce of that country, unleavened bread and roasted ears of corn, that same day. From that time, from their first eating of the produce of that country, the manna stopped falling. And having manna no longer, the Israelites fed from that year onwards on what the land of Canaan yielded.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 33:2-7. R. v. 9

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

1. I will bless the Lord at all times, / his praise always on my lips; / in the Lord my soul shall make its boast. / The humble shall hear and be glad. **R.**
2. Glorify the Lord with me. / Together let us praise his name. / I sought the Lord and he answered me; / from all my terrors he set me free. **R.**
3. Look towards him and be radiant; / let your faces not be abashed. / This poor man called; the Lord heard him / and rescued him from all his distress. **R.**

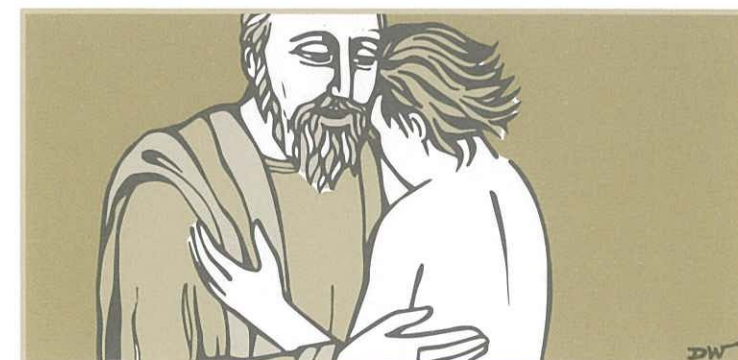
SECOND READING

2 Cor 5:17-21

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

God reconciled us to himself through Christ.

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God’s work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on his reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men’s faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ’s name



is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Lk 15:18

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ! I will rise and go to my father and tell him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

GOSPEL

Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Your brother here was dead and has come to life.

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. “This man” they said “welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So he spoke this parable to them:

“A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, “Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me.” So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

“When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, “How many of my father’s paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave