



Visitors admire paintings by Rembrandt, "The Return of the Prodigal Son" - St. Petersburg, Russia

This is arguably one of the most popular Gospel stories read at mass and is one that a lot of our young people know from religious education in classrooms.

The main character and the real hero is the loving father, who waits in anticipation for the return of his son. The younger son, through a mixture of immaturity, greed or selfishness, sets out to see the world with the inheritance he receives. Unfortunately, his luck runs out, his life hits rock bottom. The young man returns to his father's house, a place of refuge and a place where he will receive unconditional love and mercy. A party is held in his honour. The parallels between the treatment of the Father of his youngest son is so closely aligned to the way God our Father treats us when we come to his table. We are welcomed to God's house with open arms. The Gospel scene is well depicted in Rembrandt's painting, "The Return of the Prodigal Son". The father is embracing his young son, his left hand is depicted as the large strong hand of a man, his right hand is the delicate hand of a woman, showing mercy and kindness. ■

DO

Think of concrete ways you can go out to your community and bring the love and tenderness of Jesus to the lives of others. No action is too small.



REFLECT

Stories of transformation are part and parcel of the Gospels. Our interaction with Jesus brings about some kind of change within us. And it differs from person to person. Both you and I may read the same parable, the same gospel story, and it may change us, affect us in totally different ways. Today's image of the prodigal son may be an example? How would you have reacted to the return of the son after many years away from his family after spending all of his inheritance. You can imagine the tension in the household when he returns, and yet, God is not vindictive, God does not hold grudges, God is loving and merciful. The fatted calf is killed, so that the long lost son can be greeted at the door of his home with a celebration.

Many of us attend a Lenten Penitential service this time of year and in placing ourselves before God and asking for forgiveness, we are praying for some kind of transformation to take place in our lives. How can I take my human self, with all the anger I might be holding on to, with all the resentments may be feeling and transform this into an expression of God's love, forgiveness and mercy. ■

SAY

"It is not easy to find a name that will suitably express so great an excellence, unless it is better to speak in this way: ... one God of whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things."

(St. Augustine)

LEARN

Save us from the temptations that lead us away from you, and draw us back by the constancy of your love.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her.
Be joyful, all who were in mourning;
exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.*

COLLECT

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.

Amen.

FIRST READING Joshua 5:9a. 10-12

A reading from the Book of Joshua.

In those days: The LORD said to Joshua, 'Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.' While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho. And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 34(33):2-3. 4-5. 6-7. R. 9a

R: *Taste and see that the LORD is good.*

1. I will bless the LORD at all times,
praise of him is always in my mouth.
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 lowly one called; the LORD heard,
and rescued him from all his distress. **R.**

SECOND READING 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

A reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Brothers and sisters: If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ; God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL Luke 15:18

R: *Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus.*

I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him,
'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you'.

R: *Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus.*

GOSPEL Luke 15:1-3. 11-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

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."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We place before you with joy these offerings,
which bring eternal remedy, O Lord,
praying that we may both faithfully revere them
and present them to you, as is fitting,
for the salvation of all the world.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*You must rejoice, my son,
for your brother was dead and has come to life;
he was lost and is found.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world,
illuminate our hearts, we pray,
with the splendour of your grace,
that we may always ponder
what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty
and love you in all sincerity.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.