**FOR THE WEEKEND OF MAR 26-27, 2022**

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year C

**Gospel reading (Lectionary 33)**

Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus,
but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying,
“This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”
So to them Jesus addressed this parable:
“A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father,
‘Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.’
So the father divided the property between them.
After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings
and set off to a distant country
where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation.
When he had freely spent everything,
a severe famine struck that country,
and he found himself in dire need.
So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens
who sent him to his farm to tend the swine.
And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed,
but nobody gave him any.
Coming to his senses he thought,
‘How many of my father’s hired workers
have more than enough food to eat,
but here am I, dying from hunger.
I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him,
“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you;
I no longer deserve to be called your son.’
But his father ordered his servants,
‘Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him;
put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.
Take the fattened calf and slaughter it.
Then let us celebrate with a feast,
because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again
he was lost, and has been found.’
Then the celebration began.
Now the older son had been out in the field
and, on his way back, as he neared the house,
he heard the sound of music and dancing.
He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean.
The servant said to him,
‘Your brother has returned
and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf
because he has him back safe and sound.’
He became angry,
and when he refused to enter the house,
his father came out and pleaded with him.
He said to his father in reply,
‘Look, all these years I served you
and not once did I disobey your orders;
yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends.
But when your son returns
who swallowed your property with prostitutes,
for him your slaughter the fattened calf.’

He said to him,
‘My son, you are here with me always;
everything I have is yours.
But now we must celebrate and rejoice,
because your brother was dead and has come to life again;
he was lost and has been found.’”

**Intercession**

For our parish community, that renewed in our gratitude for the Father’s mercy, we might share ourselves more generously as we respond to our diocese’s Catholic Ministry Appeal.

**Copy for bulletin announcement**

We’ve all heard the parable of the Prodigal Son, the focus of today’s Gospel, several times before. We know how it begins—the younger son squandering his inheritance—and we know how it ends—the son being welcomed back into his father’s house with open arms and a celebratory feast.

But do we know what happens next? Do we stop to consider how the Prodigal Son’s life might have been transformed through that encounter with his father’s love and mercy? It’s likely that he experienced a sense of gratitude he never had before, when he had taken what his father had for granted. And it’s likely that this experience of gratitude transformed the way he lived and served on his father’s estate. Humbled by his great need and insufficiency, but also uplifted by his father’s love and providence, it’s easy to imagine that the once-Prodigal Son became a loyal and dependable partner in his father’s work, eager to give of himself

Like the Prodigal Son, we’ve all experienced profound mercy from God our Father. Despite our sinfulness, He has redeemed us through Jesus and invites us to eternal life with Him. How has this radical and undeserved gift of mercy transformed us? Has it made us more humble, more grateful, and more willing to generously give of ourselves? Because it should! If we don’t feel or act upon this gratitude, now might be an appropriate time to reflect on why that is and how we can grow in this virtue.

And once we’ve rekindled this gratefulness for all that God has given us, it might be a good time to consider how we can give of ourselves in turn. Supporting our diocesan Annual Appeal—which contributes to our Father’s work in our local Church—is one concrete way that we can respond in gratitude. Reflect upon your own experience of God’s loving, unmerited mercy and see how it prompts you to give.

**Copy for pulpit announcement**

God’s mercy transforms our lives, and calls us to gratitude and generosity. Renewed in our gratefulness for the Lord’s many gifts, please support our diocese's Catholic Ministry Appeal this Lenten season.

**Social media post/content**

Photo: Rembrandt’s *The Prodigal Son*? Pretty sure you can use it for free.

Text: *“This son of mine was dead, and has come to life again.
He was lost, and has been found.”*

Copy: We’ve all been lost, but God’s has found each of us! Are you grateful for the Lord’s love and mercy? Support our diocesan Catholic Ministry Appeal as an expression of your gratitude!