



AMDG
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT
YEAR C
31ST MARCH 2019



**Rejoice! This child of mine
was lost, and is found!**

OPENING PRAYER

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.

Laetare ('Rejoice!') Sunday is a day of joyful celebration in the middle of our Lenten journey. Today we rejoice in God's outpouring of compassion and forgiveness for us, as we remember that we are loved sinners.

In the *First Reading* the Israelites celebrate Passover in the Promised Land. Though they no longer need the manna they ate in the wilderness, they are still totally dependent on the God who provides for them.

The *Psalms* invites us to taste and see the Lord's goodness – to glorify the One who hears us, frees us and rescues us from our distress.

St Paul tells how God has reconciled himself with the whole of humanity through Christ, who has taken on our sinfulness so we might show God to others. Our task now is to be ambassadors – to continue God's great work of reconciliation by sharing the good news. (*Second Reading*)

In the *Gospel* story of the Prodigal Son, Jesus gives a wonderful picture of that same loving reconciliation in action, as we see the height and depth of a father's compassion for his penitent child. This is how much God loves us, too: so much that he yearns and waits to welcome us home with joy when we turn to him in repentance. Today's leaflet stops at v. 24, but we should take time to read on to the end of the story. Perhaps we, too, can sometimes respond a little like the aggrieved elder brother?

As Lent continues, let's pray that we might become increasingly aware of God's compassionate gaze on us, and to ask for his help in seeing others with that same generous, loving regard, regardless of who they are.

PSALM 33 (34)

R. / Taste and see that the Lord is good

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.

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.

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.

I take time to come to stillness in the way that suits me best, trusting that I am in the presence of a loving, compassionate God who welcomes me exactly as I am, however I feel.

In time I read and reread the psalm slowly, noticing words or phrases that particularly strike me.

I do not need to stay with the whole psalm unless I am so drawn.

Am I able to respond to the psalmist's joyful invitation to glorify God today, or am I perhaps hampered by anxieties or concerns?

I try to bring whatever is in my heart as openly as I can to the Lord, remembering that he already knows and understands my whole story.

I stay here as long as I need.

Before I take my leave, I bring to the Lord those known to me who are 'humble' and 'poor' in any way, and all those in the wider world who need rescuing from fear and distress.

When I am ready, I end my prayer with a sign of the cross.

Our Father ...

GOSPEL LUKE 15: 11–24 (abridged)

Jesus said, ‘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 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.’

I come quietly and gently to my time of prayer.

I ask the Lord to help me hear this familiar story anew, taking time to read slowly, reverently.

What particularly draws me, or touches me?

Perhaps I focus especially on Jesus’s description of the Father ... how he watches out ... runs to meet his boy ... the tender embrace ... his joy.

What do I find myself thinking and feeling as I witness all of this?

Now I imagine myself (re-)turning to God, or to Jesus, to ask for his forgiveness. How does he respond to me?

And in turn, how do I want to respond to him?

Trusting in his love and compassion, I share whatever is in my heart and ask for anything I need.

When I am ready, I end my prayer with my own words of thanksgiving.

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

Glorify the Lord with me.
Together let us praise his name!

Psalm

We are ambassadors for Christ.

Second Reading

While he was still far off,
his Father saw him and was moved with pity.

Gospel

This week's texts if you want to reflect further

Joshua 5: 9–12; Psalm 33 (34); 2 Cor. 5: 17–21; Luke 15: 1–3, 11–32

Ghislaine Howard (b. 1953), *The Return of the Prodigal Son*



**'This child
of mine
was dead
and has
come back
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and is
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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
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JESUIT
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