

# Link to Liturgy



## 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time Lost and Found

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### Lessons and Discussions

#### Page 5 – The Dignity of Man

*“He was lost and is found”*

#### Page 9 – The Image of God

*“his father caught sight of him and was deeply moved”*

#### Page 13 – Blessed are the Merciful

*“you are with me always, and everything I have is yours”*

**Communion Antiphon – Roman Missal**

*This should be chanted so that the time of prayer, study and discussion can be made sacred.*

*Dico vobis: Gaudium*

*Lk 15: 10*

I say unto you: there is joy among the Angels of  
God for one sin-ple sinner who repents.

**Alternate options:**

Faith of Our Fathers  
Lift High the Cross  
Take Up Your Cross  
The King of Love my Shepherd Is  
Your Arms (Remnant)

**Collect – Roman Missal**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

Look upon us, O God,  
Creator and ruler of all things,  
and, that we may feel the working of your mercy,  
grant that we may serve you with all our heart.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

**Gospel Reading – Luke 15:1-32 – Roman Missal**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

- [32] Saint Augustine, Commentary on St. John's Gospel, 51, 11
- [33] Luke 1:47
- [34] Luke 1:28
- [35] Saint Therese of Lisieux, Autobiography of a Soul, 8
- [36] Pope John Paul II; Dives In Misericordia, 6.2
- [37] Father Gabriel of Saint Mary Magdalen; Divine Intimacy; Section 210

- Glory to you O Lord

The tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus, at which the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

[The Lost Sheep]

Then he addressed this parable to them: "Who among you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wasteland and follow the lost one until he finds it? He puts it on his shoulders in jubilation. Once arrived home, he invites friends and neighbors in and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, there will like wise be more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to repent.

[The Lost Coin]

"What woman, if she has ten silver pieces and loses one, does not light a lamp and sweep the house in a diligent search until she has retrieved what she lost? And when she finds it, she calls in her friends and neighbors to say, 'Rejoice with me! I have found the silver piece I lost.' I tell you, there will be the same kind of joy before the angels of God over one repentant sinner."

[The Lost Son]

Jesus said to them: "A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that is coming to me.' So the father divided up the property. Some days later this younger son collected all his belongings and went off to a distant land, where he squandered his money on dissolute living. After he had spent everything, a great famine broke out in that country and he was in dire need. So he attached himself to one of the propertied class of the place, who sent him to his farm to take care of the pigs. He longed to fill his belly with the husks that were fodder for the pigs, but no one made a move to give him anything. Coming to his senses at last, he said: 'How many hired hands at my father's place have more than enough to eat, while here I am starving! I will break away and return to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you; I not longer deserve to be called your son. Treat me like one of your hired hands."' With that he set off for his father's house. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight

of him and was deeply moved. He ran out to meet him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. The son said to Him, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you; I no longer deserve to be called you son.' The father said to his servants; 'Quick! Bring out the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Take the fatted calf and kill it. Let us eat and celebrate because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and is found.' Then the celebration began. "Meanwhile the elder son was out on the land. As he neared the house on his way home, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked him the reason for the dancing and the music. The servant answered, 'Your brother is home, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has him back in good health.' The son grew angry at this and would not go in; but his father came out and began to plead with him. "He said in reply to his father: 'For years now I have slaved for you. I never disobeyed one of your orders, yet you never gave me so much as a kid goat to celebrate with my friends. Then, when this son of your returns after having gone through your property with loose women, you kill the fatted calf for him.' "My son,' replied the father, 'you are with me always, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice! This brother of yours was dead, and has come back to life. He was lost, and is found.'"

The Gospel of the Lord.

- Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

### **Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time**

From Life, 4-14, Saint Teresa of Avila

"Even from me some good has been brought forth by Your infinite goodness, and, the great have been my sins, the more has the great blessing of Your mercies shone forth in me. How many reasons have I for singing of them forever! I beseech You, my God, that it may be so: may I sing of them, and that without end, since You have deigned to work such exceeding great mercies in me that they amaze those who behold them, while as for me, I am drawn out of myself continually, that I may be the better able to sing Your praise. For so long as I am in myself, my Lord, and without You, I can do nothing but be cut off like the flowers in this garden, and this miserable earth will become a dunghill again as before. Permit it not, Lord. Let it not be Your

blessed fruit of they womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray. O almighty and everlasting God, who, by the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, didst prepare the body and soul of Mary, glorious Virgin and Mother, to become the worthy habitation of Thy Son: grant that we may be delivered from present evils, and from everlasting death, by her gracious intercession, in whose commemoration we rejoice. Through the same Christ our Lord, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

### **"The End" Notes**

[1] Gaudium et Spes, 41

[2] Spiritual Reading in this packet

[3] Pope John Paul II; Dives In Misericordia, 6.3

[4] Saint Gregory the Great; Homily XXXIV in Evangelia

[5] catholic.org

[6] The Liturgical Year; Abbot Gueranger, O.S.B.; Book 10, page 451

[7] Genesis 1:27

[8] 1 Timothy 2:4

[9] English translation of The Order of Mass I

[10] newadvent.org

[11] John 18:9

[12] Spiritual Reading

[13] Father John A. Hardon, S.J.; Modern Catholic Dictionary, page 120

[14] CCC 1700

[15] Officium Divinum, Sunday Vespers – Psalm 112 [113]

[16] Father Francis Fernandez; In Conversation with God; Vol. 5, section 3.1

[17] Entrance Antiphon

[18] Colossians 1:15

[19] Father John A. Hardon, S.J.; Modern Catholic Dictionary, page 234

[20] Father Gabriel of Saint Mary Magdalen; Divine Intimacy; Section 210 "Merciful Love"

[21] Genesis 3:1

[22] John 15:13

[23] Philippians 2:8

[24] Matthew 5:7

[25] Father John A. Hardon, S.J.; Modern Catholic Dictionary, page 348

[26] Luke 1:54

[27] Luke 1:50

[28] Luke 1:72

[29] Pope John Paul II; Dives In Misericordia, 6.5

[30] Peter Kreeft; Catholic Christianity

[31] Father John A. Hardon, S.J.; Modern Catholic Dictionary, page 50

**Marian Antiphon – Salve Regina – Simple Tone**

**IV. ANTIPHON SALVE REGINA, SIMPLE TONE**  
From First Vespers of the Feast of the Blessed Trinity to None on Saturday  
before the First Sunday of Advent.

Ant.  
5.

**S** Alve, Re-gi-na, \* ma-ter mi-se-ri-córdi-æ : Vi-ta, dulcé-do, et spes nostra,  
salve. Ad te clamámus, éxsu-les, fi-li-i Hevæ Ad te suspi-rámus,  
gemén-tes et flentes in hac lacrimá-rum valle. E-ia ergo, Advocá-ta  
nostra, il-los tu-os mi-se-ri-córdes ócu-los ad nos convér-te. Et Je-sum,  
bene-díctum fructum ventris tu-i, nobis post hoc exsí-li-um osténde.  
O clemens : O pi-a : O dulcis \* Virgo Ma-ri-a.

V. Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix.

R. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi

Let us pray. O almighty and everlasting God, who, by the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, didst prepare the body and soul of Mary, glorious Virgin and Mother, to become the worthy habitation of Thy Son: grant that we may be delivered from present evils, and from everlasting death, by her gracious intercession, in whose commemoration we rejoice. Through the same Christ our Lord, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, God, world without end. Amen.

**English Translation**

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn, then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the

will that a soul which You have purchased with so many trials should be lost, when You have so often redeemed it anew and have snatched it from the teeth of the horrible dragon”

**Responsory – Office of Readings – Psalm 23:1-3**

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want  
- In green pastures he gives me rest.

He guides me in the right path for his name’s sake.  
- In green pastures he gives me rest.

**The Dignity of Man – Lesson and Discussion**

*“He was lost and is found”*

Jesus compares man to a coin, sheep and a lost son in the three parables. What does this tell us about ourselves? The Church through the Gospel readings and the imagery of a coin, sheep and a lost son is teaching man the “meaning of his own existence, that is, the innermost truth about himself.”[1] In each parable a value is restored. Most central to each person is the dignity they have as a person. The prodigal son squanders his inheritance, which are all material things. These material things are lost and lost forever. What is not lost forever is his dignity, dignity although temporarily lost, can always be restored. The value of man is at the heart of these parables. Saint Theresa of Avila makes an analogy of man comparing him and his choice in life to that of flowers in a garden. Flowers that are cut off from the vine end up decomposing, losing their support, cease to reach for the heavens, cease to grow and fall to the ground unnoticed as they decompose. “For so long as I am in myself, my Lord, and without You, I can do nothing but be cut off like the flowers in this garden, and this miserable earth will become a dunghill again as before.”[2] Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, if we are cut off from the vine, we are dead and fall to the ground and decompose. If we stay connected to Christ the vine we are supported, raised from the ground and reach toward heaven. “We read the parable of the sheep that was found and then the parable of the coin that was found. Each time there is an emphasis on the same joy that is present in the case of the prodigal son...This joy indicates a good that has remained intact: even if he is a prodigal, a son does not cease to be truly his father’s son; it also indicates a good that has been found again, which in the case of the prodigal son was his return to the truth about himself.”[3]

Saint Teresa says that “as long as we are in our self” we can do nothing, what does she mean? How are we “in our self”?

**Lost Coin analogy (by Saint Gregory the Great)[4]**

**The lost coin** – the human race

**The other nine coins** – are the nine choirs of angels, Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels and Angels[5]

**The lamp** – The light is the Wisdom of God which appeared in human flesh, The Word made Flesh, Jesus Christ the Light of the World. “A lamp is a light which burns in a vessel of clay; and Light in a vessel of clay, is the Divinity in our flesh.”[6] Psalm 22: 16 speaks of Christ on the Cross, “As dry as potsherd [clay] is my throat; my tongue sticks to my palate; you lay me in the dust of death.” Jesus, Light of the World was laid into the dry clay of humanity.

Saint Gregory the Great says that the woman lost her coin when man, who had been created after God’s image, strayed from that image by committing sin. A coin bears the image of the king/ leader up on it. This short parable is the story of salvation history. Out of love God created everything and, most precious to Him, was the creation of the angels and humans. Through sin the human race strayed and although created in the image and likeness of God[7], sin caused the image to become blurred and distorted. The loving God, the Creator, the Father desired, like the Good Shepherd, that not even one would be lost, He “wills everyone to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth.”[8] For this reason the Light of the World was put into the clay of humanity (lamp) so that humanity (the lost coin) would be found, held again in the hands of God and once again, the creature would bear the image of the Creator. This mystery is summed up in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, while during the Offertory Prayer, the deacon, or Priest, pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly: “by the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”[9]

**What souls has God placed in your care?** God has placed our soul in our hands as well as those we have authority over and those who are influenced by us, for example younger brothers, sister, children, etc. The value of a drachma [coin] was about 22

*day we will experience nothing more than prayer, work, joy and suffering. In making this offering each day we are saying that all of our prayers, works, joys and sufferings are for a reason, they have meaning. What is the reason? What is the meaning? We prayer, work, praise and suffer for the intentions of the Sacred Heart, the salvation of souls, reparation of sin, the intentions of our friends and family and bishop and Pope. Every thought, word and deed is connected to Christ. You can look up the intentions of the Holy Father online, he will always have two intentions for each month. You can also write down on an index card anyone through out your day who asks you to pray for them or that you feel is in need of prayer, you can add these intentions after the part that says, “for the intentions of all our associates”. Another idea is to use the Facebook friends that show up on your profile Monday morning and pray for those friends (maybe 6 people) for the whole week. You can add their names after the part that says, “for the intentions of all our associates”.*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I will begin this day. I thank you, Lord for having preserved me during the night. I will do my best to make all I do today pleasing to you and in accordance with your will. My dear mother Mary, watch over me this day. My Guardian Angel, take care of me. St. Joseph and all you saints of God, pray for me. O Jesus, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary I offer you my prayers, works, joys, sufferings of this day in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the world. I offer them for all the intentions of your Sacred Heart: the salvation of souls, reparation for sin, for the intention of all our Associates, the intentions of our Bishops, and in particular for those recommended by our Holy Father this month.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

with me! I have found the silver piece I lost.” The Father of the prodigal son said “Let us eat and celebrate because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and is found.” “Jesus said and repeated: “There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over ninety-nine just” thus giving us to understand what a great glory a soul gives to God when, after many falls, it comes back to Him, repentant and confident. The message of this parable applies not only to great sinners, those converted from serious sin, but also to those who turn from venial sins, who humble themselves and rise again after faults committed through weakness or lack of reflection.”[37] As was stated above the most basic response toward a sinner is to “welcome” and to “eat”, Jesus welcomed and ate with sinners. What does this mean? It means to be charitable and hospitable, to look with kindness toward sinners. To eat is to take it to the next step. To eat with someone means you have to go to their house, or they go to yours. This means a sense of openness. It is said that Pope Saint Gregory the Great opened his dinner table each night to the homeless from the streets of Rome. The homeless came into the Vatican and ate with the Pope. This means for both parties a sense of vulnerability. This also means a commitment to sharing, communicating and fellowship.

**What happens when we humble ourself and repent from sin, even venial sins by returning to the Father through**

**Sacramental Confession?** We cause God great joy and He rejoices in us. What better reward than to bring great joy to the one who created us. This does not mean that we should go out and sin a lot and then repent. There is enough sin in our life. All we need to do is examine our conscience daily and begin shining the Light of Christ in our life and the sins (even the most minor and unnoticed) will become evident. We can then repent from our sins, asking God for the Grace necessary to sin no more.

**Profession of Faith or Popular Devotion – Apostleship of Prayer – The Morning Offering**

*The Apostleship of Prayer is a worldwide organization, founded at Vals, France, in 1844, to promote devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, one requirement was to recite the Daily Offering. One way we can show a great honor, love and devotion to the Sacred Heart is to offer our life each morning to God, giving Him our prayers, works, joys and sufferings of the day. If we truly give God our prayers, works, joys and sufferings, what is left to give, in one*

cents.[10] The woman had 222 cents or \$2.22. She only lost 22 cents but still had \$2. God wills that all are saved, God is not satisfied with have 9 coins, He wants 10. He is not satisfied with \$2 he wants \$2.22. Every cent, every soul matters! None can be lost! Jesus says, “I have not lost any of those you gave me.”[11] The woman was given 10 coins and, none will be lost. We are given by God the care of our own soul and the souls of others; we must be as diligent as Jesus and as the woman. If we are given 10 souls to care and only one is lost, we must work and pray so that none may be lost. This diligence is expressed in the Marine Corp motto, “No Man left Behind”. The value of man ultimately is the soul and no soul can be left behind.

**How is man like the coin?** A coin is made by man; it is formed from the elements and has an image of its maker on it. Adam was formed from the element sand formed in the image and likeness of his maker. A coin is helpless and vulnerable, but it has value. Man is helpless and vulnerable, but has intrinsic value. A \$20 bill can be wadded up, thrown in water, dried out, chewed up by an animal and even ripped in one corner, but it still has value. Man can be beaten down, shoved around, chewed up, spit out and even torn but man still has value. If money is “lost” it still has value but cannot be used. If man is “lost” in sin, he still has value, but cannot be used by God. He cannot live out the potential that God has called him to.

**If we have value, why can’t we redeem our self, pay off our own debt?** To redeem “is to buy or pay off”. Money is only good if you have it! For example you cannot buy something from a store if you left your money at home, or even if you lost your money. Christ’s life redeems us, pays off our debt. We have value, but that value is “lost” in sin. Christ’s life has value and is not “lost” in sin. It is in Christ that we are “found” and our value, our life, is restored and redeemed. We are able to place our life and its value with Christ’s on the cross, thus finding true redemption. Our souls are “purchased with so many trials” and have been “snatched from the teeth of the horrible dragon [Satan]”[12] Christ, our Victor, purchased our soul with His passion and death on the Cross and snatched us forever from the horrible dragon through His resurrection.

**How is man like a sheep?** We stray. Like the coin we have the image and likeness of our maker on us but like the sheep we stray. Why? Due to original sin we have concupiscence. Concupiscence is the “insubordination of man’s desires to the

dictates of reason...it refers to the spontaneous movement of the sensitive appetites toward whatever the imagination portrays as pleasant and away from whatever it portrays as painful"[13]

Sheep, not unlike other animals, follow desire over reason and are moved by their senses toward what is pleasant and away from what is painful. How often do humans, give up their humanity and become like animals, in which desire and appetite move them to what is pleasant and away from what is painful? The shepherd left the 99 to find the 1 stray, lost sheep and then carried that sheep on his shoulders. Jesus, the Good Shepherd goes out to find us, the stray, the lost, and carries each of us with all our sins, our burdens upon His shoulder as He carried the cross upon His shoulders. He carries us, as He carried the Cross, all the way to Calvary, all the way to victory, all the way to redemption.

#### **What does God's call of conversion say about humanity?**

What makes us (humans) different than a coin or sheep? There is a process of conversion, which is the very cooperation of man with God, humanity with divinity. God saves us but wants us to cooperate with Him, the dignity of man is that we are not a mere sheep or a lifeless coin, but a living creature, which can spiritual grow toward communion with the Father. "The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God; it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude. It is essential to a human being freely to direct himself to this fulfillment..."

#### **What is the fulfillment of man? What do we look towards for fulfillment?**

No one will argue that each person should be free to direct themselves to fulfillment. The question is not whether man has the right to direct himself and find fulfillment, the real question is whether or not what he is seeking will truly bring him fulfillment. Many people direct themselves in the wrong direction and can even waste their whole life looking for fulfillment in things that will never bring fulfillment.

...By his deliberate actions, the human person does, or does not, conform to the good promised by God and attested by moral conscience. Human beings make their own contribution to their interior growth; they make their whole sentient and spiritual lives into means of this growth. With the help of grace they grow in virtue, avoid sin, and if they sin they entrust themselves as did the prodigal son to the mercy of our Father in heaven.[14] Can a coin or a sheep, grow in virtue, avoid sin and repent? We

#### **What are we jealous about, worried about, and threatened by? How do we feel, when after doing everything right in our families, schools and groups, a person who has strayed comes back and is accepted with open arms?**

The elder son might have been jealous, worried or threatened by the younger brother's return and may have feared what his brother's return might mean to his life. Maybe the elder son, wanted the father all to himself. Do we ever want God, Church all for our self? Do we share God and the richness of the Church with others? It comes down to a trust in the father, if the father is fair to the younger son, he will also be fair to the elder son. "How sweet a joy it is to think that God is just; that, in other words, he makes allowances for our weaknesses and understands perfectly that frailty of our humanity. So what have I to be afraid of? If God, who is perfectly just, shows such mercy in forgiving the prodigal son, must He not also be just to me, 'who am always with Him'?"[35] Those who are "good" and do the right thing and are "always with Him" have nothing to fear. They should be grateful for God's generosity toward both saint and sinner.

#### **Activity – Pictures of sinners**

Show a picture of hardened sinners in spiritual need (prostitute, thief, gangster, stereotypes of sinners). You may also want to put a "normal" looking person. Ask: What do people think after seeing the pictures? Hatred, judgment, fear, compassion, mercy, love, dignity, etc. **Do we have compassion and sympathy? Is our reaction toward these pictures the same as pictures of those in physical need (could also show pictures of those in physical need)? What is the value, the dignity, the good that needs to be restored and are we motivated to restore it?**

"Notice, the father is aware that a fundamental good has been saved: the good of his son's humanity. Although the son has squandered the inheritance, nevertheless his humanity is saved. Indeed, it has been, in a way, found again."[36]

#### **What is our attitude toward sinners? What should be our attitude toward sinners while that are "in sin" and "after they have repented from sin"? Do we rejoice when a "lost" person comes back into the hands of God?**

In the three parables there is rejoicing and celebration when a sinner repents. The shepherd "invites friends and neighbors in and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep'". We see the example of the woman "when she finds it [the coin], she calls in her friends and neighbors to say, 'Rejoice

you. I never disobeyed one of your orders, yet you never gave me so much as a kid goat to celebrate with my friends. Then, when this son of your returns after having gone through your property with loose women, you kill the fatted calf for him.’ “My son,’ replied the father, ‘you are with me always, and everything I have is yours’ This reward is eternal (spiritual), not always temporal (material). We sometimes long and desire to have the temporal reward of the “fatted calf, the robe, the ring, the friends, the party”. The Father (God), tells us that you will be with me and that you will have all that is mine. What does this mean to be with God? What does it mean to have what is His? Where did Jesus go? What did Jesus have? While on this earth, Jesus, the Son of God, went to the Cross and was mocked, beaten and killed. If we are with God and have everything that is His, we must take in all the joys and the sufferings. This is not glamorous or even popular but. What is our goal? Shouldn’t being with God and sharing all that is His be enough? If our goal is to avoid sin and pursue good then we should want nothing other than “to be with God” and “to have everything that is His”. “When will one find goodness without Christ? When will a person find evil with him?”[32] There is no goodness without Christ; this is the reason why the son returned to the Father, there was no goodness absent from the Father. In the same way connected to Christ there is no evil, this is why Mary says “[I] rejoice in God my savior”[33] The angel Gabriel says to Mary, “the Lord, is with you.”[34] Mary is immaculate, free from sin and full of Grace because she is with the Lord and the Lord is with her. Do we desire to be so present to Christ that we are full of Grace and thus free from sin? God is not a God who feels compassion and sympathy but remains absent and removed from His people. God is a merciful God who is willing and ready to act in the life of His children, to show mercy. Many people believe that God is like a clockmaker that created the clock and then lets it run itself. These people believe that God created the world and man, but has stepped back and let the world and man take care of themselves. This believe called Deism is incorrect.

**What is Deism?** Deism is a religious and philosophical belief that a supreme being created the universe, and that this (and religious truth in general) can be determined using reason and observation of the natural world alone, without the need for either faith or organized religion. Many Deists reject the notion that God intervenes in human affairs, for example through miracles and revelations.

must remember that as humans we can be easily lost (like a coin), we can easily stray (like a sheep) but we have the dignity of a son, not a slave, that desires union with the Father and with the help of Grace answers the call to come home.

Like the flowers in the garden that St. Teresa spoke of, we are rooted in our image in likeness of God. But our growth depends on whether or not we want to fulfill our vocation to reach toward God. To grow upward we must stay connected to Christ. Christ is our stem that gives us both support and nourishment. Our roots (our value in the image of God) are always there but what happens if we choose not to grow, to stay connected to Christ? If this is the case we fall to the ground and decompose in the soil.

**How many people lie forgotten, decomposing in the soil of sin? Is there any hope for those that fall to the ground and as St. Teresa says, “become a dunghill”?** Many people do fall because they choose not to conform to the good God promises them, but there is always hope. We can always repent. Psalm 113:7 speaks about those who have fallen and “become a dunghill”. “Who is as the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high; and looketh down on the low things in heaven and earth? Raising up the needy from the earth, and lifting up the poor out of the dunghill: That he may place him with princes, with the princes of his people.”[15] In looking at this Psalm we see the faithful as “the needy,” those on the vine, that like flowers, reach toward heaven only by the help of God. We see “the poor” as the sinners, like the prodigal son, that have left the Father and are perishing in sin. God in His mercy can lift sinners out of the dunghill. He not only redeems the sinner by restoring their value but gives them a higher place than when they left. Just as the prodigal son was given a high position upon his return home, God will place the repentant sinner “with the princes of his people”. We only have to look at the life of the Saints to see great sinners such as Saint Augustine and Saint Paul who are considered “princes of the Church”.

### **The Image of God – Lesson and Discussion**

*“his father caught sight of him and was deeply moved”*

**How is God portrayed in the parables, for example how is God like the shepherd, the woman, the father?** “The central figure in these parables is God himself. He does everything He can to recover those of his children who have succumbed to temptation. He is the Good Shepherd who goes out in search of

the lost sheep. Once He has found it, He brings it home on his shoulders since it is trembling with exhaustion, worn out as a result of its disobedience. God is represented as the woman who, having lost a drachma [coin], lights a lamp and sweeps the house in a careful search for it. Finally, he is seen as the loving father who goes out every day to await the return of his dissolute son. He strains his eyes to see if the newest figure on the horizon is his youngest son.[16]

“O God, how much we value your mercy. All mankind can gather under your protection.”[17] When we speak of the image of Jesus, we must remember that Jesus is “the image of the invisible God”[18]. When Saint Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father, Jesus said if you know me you know the Father. In His kind mercy, Jesus, who is the image of God, gives us several images of Himself, allowing us to have a personal relationship with Him. In particular we are given two images, which help us to have confidence in the Mercy of God. Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Jesus, the Sacred Heart.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd – The title of Christ, which he gave himself, in so many words and in the Parable of the Good Shepherd. Implicit in the title is God’s mercy on sinners and his concern for the weak and lowly. Already in the catacombs the Savior was often represented as the Good Shepherd.[19]

**MUSIC – “King of Love my Shepherd Is” by Saint Columba – POP CULTURE CONNECTION – 4:31**

<http://youtu.be/n0TGpDE2FJo>

(Verse 1) The King of love my Shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never, I nothing lack if I am His, And He is mine forever.

(Verse 2) Where streams of living water flow, My ransomed soul He leadeth, And where the verdant pastures grow, With food celestial feedeth.

(Verse 3) Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, but yet in love He sought me, and on His shoulder gently laid, And home, rejoicing, brought me.

(Verse 4) In death’s dark vale I fear no ill, With Thee, dear Lord, beside me; Thy rod and staff my comfort still, Thy cross before to guide me.

(Verse 5) Thou spread’st a table in my sight; Thy unction grace bestoweth; And O what transport of delight, From Thy pure chalice floweth!

the Resurrection. We must not want or support evil, but when it does occur, we must draw good from it.

Mercy is to reach out and give, the opposite of mercy is avarice which is to reach out and grab. “Avarice is greed, the selfish reach to grab and keep for oneself (the opposite of mercy, which is the reach to give, to share with others, even the undeserving).”[30] “In its strict sense, avarice is the inordinate holding on to possessions or riches instead of using these material things for some worthwhile purpose.”[31] The elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son does not show mercy, but rather it’s opposite. In his greediness, the elder son, held tightly to his possessions.

**What possessions is the elder brother holding onto? Are we threatened that others will take these possessions from us?**

I am the favored son, I am the hard worker, I am loved by the servants. It is the elder brother that wants to hold onto everything. He wants to possess and not give up the robe, ring and shoes. Saint Augustine says that the “robe” is the sign of honor. Would the elder brother loose honor? The “ring” symbolizes restoration. What would happen to the elder brother if his younger brother was restored and brought back in the family? The “shoes” show that the younger son is now free, does this freedom threaten the elder brother?

The elder brother’s life is defined by his material possessions. We cannot define our self or others by material possessions; if we do we are on track to practice avarice, instead of mercy. There is a phrase, “Are you going to have more or be more?” The prodigal son had more and then lost everything. Our life, our dignity, our definition of self does not rest in having more but in being more. We do not say what are you going to have when you grow up, but rather what are you going to be. The elder brother is worried about holding onto material goods such as honor, status, freedom. He does not want to share with his younger brother. If we are faithful, God says that our reward is that “we are with Him” and “everything He has is ours”. For the elder son, who is the faithful son, this reward is not enough.

**Why do we sometimes feel that the reward “to be with God” and “to have everything that is His” not enough for us?**

Luke tells us that the faithful son “grew angry at this and would not go in; but his father came out and began to plead with him. “He said in reply to his father: ‘For years now I have slaved for

laborers, the first being His son, of which Mary said, “He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy”[26] a mercy that is “from age to age to those who fear him.”[27] This same mercy Zachariah spoke of when he said, “He promised to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant.”[28]

Compassion or sympathy is easy, a video or story can move us to compassion or sympathy. We can have sympathy for our self, for our trials, the drama in our life, but if we are not compelled to do something about our trials we do not show mercy toward our self.

**Why is it easier to just “talk” about our problems or the problems of others, to just feel the drama, but not do anything?** Anyone can “talk” about problems and “feel” the drama of life, anyone can have compassion. The challenge is to imitate Christ’s words and actions and be merciful.

**What is it that makes us jump to the next step and have mercy, the ready willingness to help?** We cannot just focus on the “feeling”. A video of starving children in a third world country moves us to sympathy and compassion, but unless we see beyond the feeling we won’t be moved to help. We must see a value, a good, a dignity and have a passion and willingness to restore the value. “Mercy is manifested in its true and proper aspect when it restores to value, promotes and draws good from all the forms of evil existing in the world and in man.”[29] Mercy can only take place when we are passionate to draw good from all forms of evil, no matter how hopeless the evil is, we have hope in the midst of despair, light in the midst of darkness. We see this in the arts, when in literature and movies, a character won’t give up on the underdog, why, because they believe in them. They believe in the “good” that is within them, the “value” that no one else notices or believes in.

**What are the different responses we can have when we see evil (sin) in our life, the life of others or in the world?** We can get upset and even angry. We can ignore it or even begin to believe that evil does not exist. We can rationalize it saying that it really isn’t evil or that it isn’t that big of a deal. We can show no compassion at all saying, “get over it”. We can draw good from evil. God doesn’t will, or want evil but does allow evil and wills that good will come from it. The best example of this is the crucifixion, which is a great evil, but from it came hope, hope in

(Verse 6) And so through all the length of days, Thy goodness faileth never; Good Shepherd, may I sing, Thy praise Within Thy house forever.

**How does this song tell the story of Salvation History? What is Salvation History?** This song tells the story of the Good Shepherd and Salvation History. “He [Jesus] shows us the good shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep; it is a picture of Jesus coming down from heaven to search for poor human beings lost in the dark caves of sin. In order to find them, rescue them, and bring them back to the sheepfold, He does not hesitate to undergo the greatest sufferings and even death....We might say that the image of the good shepherd – which was so greatly loved in the early days of the Church – is equivalent of that of the Sacred Heart; both are living, concrete expressions of the merciful love of Jesus, and they urge us to go to Him with complete confidence.”[20]

**What prevents us from having confidence in His mercy, what prevents us from trusting Him? How do the images of the Good Shepherd and the Sacred Heart help us to grow in confidence?** God is so good to us, so merciful to us. Satan, the father of lies, sows seeds of doubt in our minds about “Our Father”. From the beginning he said to Eve, “Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?”[21] The image of God that Satan portrays is a Father that we cannot trust. This distrust makes us lose confidence in the all-powerful God and have a distorted view of “Our Father” Jesus, in the images of the Good Shepherd and the Sacred Heart, gives both followers of Christ and those who do not yet know God comfort and confidence. Both images are personal, so much so that the Heart of Jesus, “thrills with joy when, humbly acknowledging our fault, we come to fling ourselves into His arms, imploring forgiveness; then, He loves us even more tenderly than before we fell” ( Saint Therese of the Child Jesus)

Jesus appeared to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-90) on several occasions; and in one of these visions He showed her His Heart, pierced with a wound, encircled with a crown of thorns, surrounded by flames and surmounted by a cross - as we see it usually represented in pictures and statues at the present day. He commanded her to practice and to teach others the devotion to His Sacred Heart, because of His ardent desire to be loved by men and His wish to give to all mankind the treasures of His love and mercy.

**What is the Sacred Heart a symbol of?** It shows Jesus love for the Father and the Spirit (the love of the Holy Trinity). It shows that Christ is one person with two natures, divine and human. His divinity is infused into every part of His life and is the burning source of His love. His humanity possesses the full power of feelings, emotions, perceptions, senses like that of a human heart.

### **Activity – Draw the Sacred Heart**

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is one of the most popular icons of the Catholic Church and of Jesus. It is very popular even in pop culture including tattoos. A simple five step drawing can teach us a lot about Jesus, His humanity, His passion, and death; His love for us.

**Step 1** – draw a Heart. This element stresses the humanity of Christ, the Word made flesh, the Jesus is one person with two natures, human and divine. We must not forget that Christ is human. This heart is real and alive and is beating right now for all. Jesus is physically present in only two places, in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament. In the Eucharistic Miracle of Lanciano, Italy in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century the bread and wine turned into the Body and Blood of Christ not only in essence (as they do at each Mass) but also in appearance, meaning that the Body, looked, felt and tasted like flesh. 1300 years later the flesh can still be viewed, when tested by scientists the results declared that 1. The flesh was muscle tissue and 2. The muscle tissue was that of the heart.

**Step 2** – draw fire around the Heart. Jesus’s heart burns for love of us. The heart of Jesus is not hardened or cold, it is enflamed with love for humanity, a love that motivates Him to save the whole world, even the most lost sinner.

**Step 3** – draw a crown of thorns. This human heart of Jesus, burning with compassion and love for humanity, is surrounded, wrapped with the crown of thorns. Jesus took on flesh and was embraces not with comfort but with suffering.

**Step 4** – draw a cross on top of the heart. The culmination of Christ love for us is His passion and death on the Cross. “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”[22]

**Step 5** – draw a wound in the side of the heart. This wound is wear Christ was stabbed with the spear. The wound is our entrance the door to the heart of Christ. From this wound in the side flows water (Baptism) and blood (the Eucharistic Sacrifice) All the steps flow together. Jesus became human (heart) because of His burning love for us (fire), this fire, passion, desire motivated Him to save us even though His life was wrapped in suffering (thorns). This suffering which fully embraced Him, and He also fully embrace “becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross”[23] (the cross). The fruit of this obedience and charity is our way, our door into the Life of Christ (wound).

### **Blessed are the Merciful – Lesson and Discussion**

*“you are with me always, and everything I have is yours”*

From this Gospel we see two people that are not “merciful” and that do not “rejoice” when the lost has been found. Their heart, unlike the Sacred Heart, is hardened and cold. The Pharisees condemn Jesus for his compassion for sinners and do not like the fact that he “welcomes sinners and eats with them”. The elder son in the parable of the prodigal son is angry at his father’s mercy and does not like the fact that the father welcomes and eats with the younger brother. To “welcome” and “eat” with someone is the most basic form of hospitality and kindness. The Pharisees and elder brother are proof that sin causes us to lose the sense of even the most basic “good”. Jesus tells us in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”[24] In our thoughts, words and actions toward sinners we can either practice mercy, or the opposite of mercy, which is avarice (greed).

**What is mercy?** The disposition to be kind and forgiving.

Founded on compassion, mercy differs from compassion or the feeling of sympathy in putting this feeling into practice with a readiness to assist. It is therefore the ready willingness to help anyone in need, especially in need of pardon or reconciliation. [25]

In Matthew 9:35-38 we see the compassion of Christ, which then moves Him to mercy. “At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd.” Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.” God in His mercy has sent and continues to send