



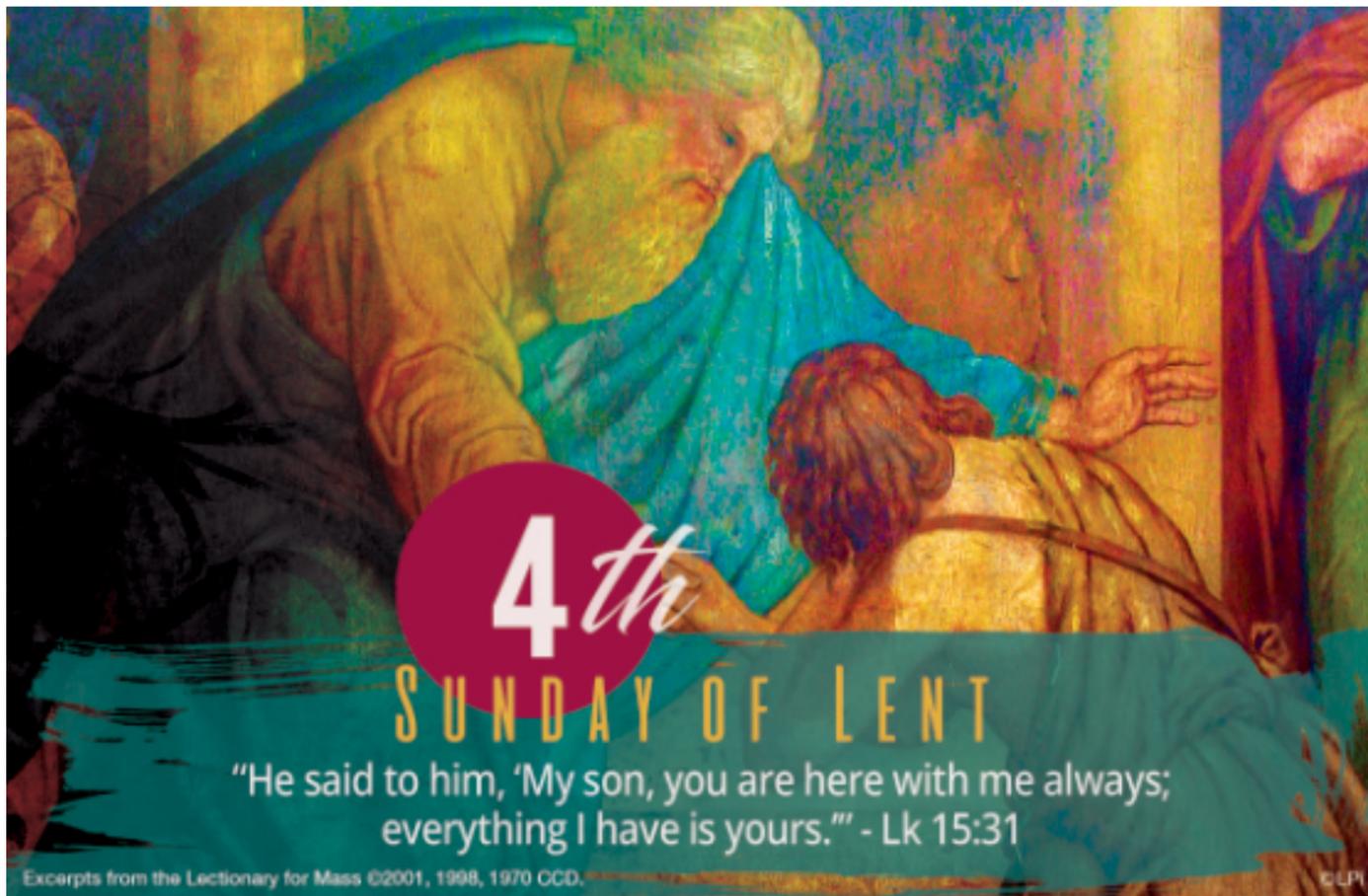
# parish newsletter

27 March 2022 | Fourth Sunday of Lent (C)

## Father, I have sinned against heaven

God's love story reveals itself in our stories, experiences, and aspirations. We are all prodigal sons and daughters. There are many times in our lives when we would "sell our souls" in order to pursue our passions. We pursued what we wanted without regard for others or God. We have sowed our oats, thrown ourselves into careless pleasures, spent what we know we ought to have saved, turned our backs on those we love and abused gifts we have been given. We even hit bottom and realised the silliness and self-destruction of it all. We needed to come home. We knew we erred and needed a gentle presence to show us God's unconditional love. This wayward journey home changed us.

As much as we need to be welcomed, we are also the one who needs to do the welcoming and mercy giving. Those we love need our guidance, but they don't always take it. We know that what they are doing is off the mark, self-destructive and wrong. We have to let them go and let it happen, even though they might get hurt. As we wait and hope, they choose to make their way back to us. They don't need us to judge them. They have done enough of that to themselves. We immediately embrace them and are just happy they're home. God uses us to help heal them. Knowing how much



we craved understanding and forgiveness ourselves, we can now freely give it away. God uses what he has taught us to teach others.

We are also the entitled ones. At least we "think" we are entitled. After all, we work hard for what we have. We cannot get our heads around the idea that someone can get something that I really deserve! If I do what I'm supposed to do, I ought to be rewarded for that, right? If I do something wrong, I ought to pay

the consequences. This is justice, isn't it? This is not God's justice. God is all about love, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness. God's justice is love freely given without merit. We carry the stories of the prodigal son, the unconditional forgiving father, and the entitled angry brother with us. When we make friends with all three, humbly telling those stories to others makes us Christ's ambassadors.

## Everyday Stewardship

### The Face on God's Brochure

When a church is raising funds for a new building or a diocese is launching a stewardship appeal, there is usually someone — or several someone's — who serves as the face of the campaign. Maybe it's a married couple, or a family, or a group of folks who have been particularly active in the community and can speak to the worthiness of whatever endeavour is being undertaken.

Often times, for better or worse, we fill that role for God. We are the face on the front of His promotional brochure. If we call

ourselves Christians, that means that people will meet Christ through us. That's what being an Everyday Steward is — a steward, everyday; someone who conducts his Master's business when the Master is not seen.

It can be intimidating because we have so much baggage and no capabilities of our own. But then we remember that we are offered reconciliation through Christ — that "the old things have passed away, (and) new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). We remember that we are the prodigal sons, and the fattened calf has been

slaughtered on our behalf. But it's a role that requires commitment. The story of the prodigal son is only compelling and only means something because the son, presumably, embraced his reconciliation to his father. He didn't go on to abandon him again.

So let us think to ourselves each day, "Whenever I encounter will meet Christ's ambassador. I was dead and have come to life again. How can I speak to the worthiness of that reconciliation? How can I make others desire it?"

— Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

## Living the Paschal Mystery

This Fourth Sunday of Lent is traditionally called "Laetare Sunday," from the Latin meaning "to rejoice" or "to be joyful." This is a perfect Sunday on which to proclaim this gospel about the Prodigal Son. The father is so joyful at his son's return home that he forgives his wanderings and squanderings and orders a feast to be prepared and celebrated. Sinners though we are, just so does our merciful Father long to embrace and celebrate with us. We have only to return to him. Expecting, hoping, anticipating minimal response from his father, the son returns home and receives lavishly from his father. The father doesn't

answer the son's confession with words. Rather, he begins the concrete actions of showing lavish mercy and welcome. The point: Jesus' welcome of sinners makes visible the love and mercy of God our Father, a love and mercy we all need because we all are sinful and in need of forgiveness. Forgiveness brings us to accept others (and ourselves) as weak human beings who often hurt others and cause them anguish. Forgiveness helps us to not let the past determine our choices and actions. Furthermore, the "ministry of reconciliation" (second reading) given to us by God places us in the role of the merciful father, reminding

us of not only the value but the necessity of forgiveness. We are like the parable father when we are compassionate and forgiving toward those who have harmed us, when we are urged to celebrate a feast when someone (ourselves included, of course!) turns from wrongful ways. Sometimes we are like the two sons who act rashly and need forgiveness. Sometimes we are like the father who extends lavish forgiveness.

According to "the Pharisees and scribes" in this gospel, Jesus entertained all the wrong people! Who would want to associate with, let alone feast with,

sinners? In the parable, the prodigal son entertained all the wrong desires! The elder son entertained anger and jealousy, pettiness and closed heartedness! On the other hand, the father tendered reconciliation leading to feasting. In our lives, God tenders mercy and forgiveness leading to new Life. What do we entertain in our hearts? What do we tender in our relationships? With whom do we feast?

Sometimes, like the two sons in the parable, we entertain all the wrong things. Repentance helps us entertain the right things. Our human tendency is to think we can make a go of life on our own. If we are happy to settle for minimums, some of us can muddle through life reasonably well. This parable reminds us that God offers us so much more.

The father is a model of mercy and reconciliation. It is the father who models for us paschal mystery living. It is the father in the parable who models for us the mercy of our heavenly Father—mercy that not only forgives and reconciles, but offers a feast. If we choose to die to self ("coming to [our] senses") and return to God we are greeted with forgiveness and feasting. Even more, at our heavenly Father's feast we aren't simply welcomed back as the sons and daughters we were, but are transformed into more perfect sons and daughters sharing in divine Life. We feast on much more than a fattened calf; the feast to which we are invited is nothing less than the Body and Blood of the Son. Receiving God's forgiveness and mercy, and offering the same to one another, is how we pass from Wednesday ashes to Easter feasting. Let us rejoice!

## Live the Liturgy

Have you ever given thought to the fact that you are an "ambassador for

Christ?" An ambassador is an accredited diplomat and official representative. We



are asked to be ambassadors for Christ and his message of reconciliation. Within each one of us is a prodigal son who realises the need to return home, an elder brother who struggles with entitlement and self-pity, and a forgiving father who simply wants to celebrate love. Realising that all of these things are operative in our hearts, we can bring credibility to God's ministry of reconciliation. Genuine witnesses are those who not only recognise their need for wholeness, mercy, and

forgiveness but also their tendency to be over self-focused and stubborn. Then, discovering freedom from all that binds them, they can then extend the love they have received to others. These ambassadors embody unity, mercy, and reconciliation and can look on others with deep compassion because they know what it is to walk in their shoes. Can God count on you to deliver this message?



**First Reading**

While the Israelites were encamped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they celebrated the Passover. (Jos 5:10)

**Psalm:**

Taste and see that the Lord is good. (Ps 33[34])

**Second Reading:**

And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5:18)

**Gospel Acclamation:**

I will leave this place and go to my father and say: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.'

**Gospel:**

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. (Lk 15:32)

# This Week

**27 FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (C)**

Jos 5:9a, 10-12/Ps 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7 [9a]/2 Cor 5:17-21/Lk 15:1-3, 11-32  
 10:30 **Mass** St Mary's Áine Warren (RIP)  
 15:30 **Parish Retreat Begins** St Mary's Catholic Centre  
 17:00 **Mass** St Mary's People of the Parish  
 18:30 **Parish Pastoral Council** St Mary's

**28 Monday**

Is 65:17-21/Ps 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b/Jn 4:43-54  
 09:00 **Breakfast with God** Mercy Chapel  
 12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Mary Ann Banks (RIP)  
 13:00 **Irish Musical Afternoon** St Mary's Catholic Centre  
 18:30 **Retreat Workshop** St Mary's Catholic Centre  
 20:00 **Prayer Group** St Cecilia's

**29 Tuesday**

Ez 47:1-9, 12/Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9/Jn 5:1-16  
 12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Ints of Joanne Redford  
 12:45 **Rosary** St Mary's  
 13:00 **Over 60s** St Mary's Catholic Centre  
 17:00 **Chosen Tuesday** Upper Room  
 18:30 **Retreat Workshop** St Mary's Catholic Centre

**30 Wednesday**

Is 49:8-15/Ps 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18/Jn 5:17-30  
 12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Maisie & Jim Mason (RIP)  
 12:45 **Wednesday Walk** Upper Room  
 18:30 **Retreat Workshop** St Mary's Catholic Centre

**31 Thursday**

Ex 32:7-14/Ps 106:19-20, 21-22, 23/Jn 5:31-47  
 10:00 **Confessions** St Cecilia's  
 10:00 **Open House** St Mary's Catholic Centre  
 10:30 **Mass & Adoration** St Cecilia's Wallace Hepburn (RIP)  
 12:05 **Requiem Mass** St Mary's Nora Ridley  
 17:00 **Evening with Jesus and Friends** Mercy Chapel

**1 Friday**

Wis 2:1a, 12-22/Ps 34:17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23/Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30  
 11:30 **Stations of the Cross** St Mary's  
 12:05 **Mass** St Mary's Margaret Leonard (RIP)  
 12:45 **Soup Lunch** St Mary's Catholic Centre

**2 Saturday**

Jer 11:18-20/Ps 72:3, 9bc-10, 11-12/Jn 7:40-53  
 10:00 **Parish Retreat Ends** St Mary's Catholic Centre  
 10:30 **Confessions** St Mary's  
 11:00 **Mass** St Mary's James McBride (RIP)  
 11:45 **Confessions** St Mary's  
 12:00 **RCIA** Upper Room  
 18:00 **Vigil Mass** St Cecilia's Nora Doherty (RIP)

**3 FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (C)**

Is 43:16-21/Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6 [3]/Phil 3:8-14/Jn 8:1-11  
 10:30 **Mass** St Mary's Mary Sverha (RIP)  
 17:00 **Mass** St Mary's People of the Parish

## Announcements

**Parish Retreat**

Our retreat guides are offering three workshops this week which are open to everyone, even if you're not doing the retreat. They take place on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 6.30pm in St Mary's Hall.

**Children's Liturgy**

It's great to see so many children coming for children's liturgy, but we are still short of catechists to help run it. If your children attend can you please consider joining the team of catechists? You'll need to have a safe-guarding check but we can help you with that. Please

they are far beyond the reach of many families.

speak to one of the catechists if you can help.

**St Joseph's Panyangara**

Our lenten project this year is to help buy 'eco stoves' to support families in our sister Parish, St Joseph's, Panyangara, Uganda.

Most food is prepared on open fires using firewood. This causes deforestation, loss of habitat, produces harmful fumes for young children and means women spend hours each day looking for firewood.

Eco stoves are far more efficient, use much less wood and produce no harmful fumes. At £30 each,

For Lent we're inviting every family to try and raise £30 or whatever they can to buy a family in Panyangara an eco stove as an Easter gift. Please put your donation in an envelope marked 'Eco Stove' and put it in the collection or hand it in.

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**St Mary's Church Cleaning?**

What are you doing at 9am on Thursday mornings? How about helping out with the weekly big clean? Tea, coffee, biscuits and good company are provided!

**Gift Aid Envelopes**

Please collect your new Gift



Bernadette, Jean Maureen, Christopher, Paula, Peter, Emilia, Jean, Teresa, Cath, the sick sisters at Oaklea, David, Marion, Dave, Neil, Paul, Andrew, Jacob, Stella, David, Alisa, Susan, Clive, Mary, Ronnie



Sr Mary Fintan, Norman Dowson, Norah Doherty, Nora Ridley

Let us know if you would like a name added to the list.

## Questions for the Week

**First Reading:** After the Israelites settled into the land of Canaan (the Promised Land), no longer was there any need for the "manna" from heaven. As the season of Lent continues, what have you been able to let go of?

**Gospel:** In Jesus' parable of the lost (prodigal) son, which character do you most resonate with, and why?

**Second Reading:** Paul emphasised to the Corinthians the importance of reconciliation with God. Why do you think reconciliation is so key to our relationship with

## Why do we do that?



**Question:** I have been away from the Church for a few years and really want to get active again, not so much for me, but for my children. Is this a bad reason to come

back to Church?

**Answer:** If you are on your way to the supermarket, and you are forced to detour from your usual route because of road work, does the food you buy taste different? Is the meal less filling? Are the vegetables less tasty? Of course not. In our faith journey, there are many detours called sin. Some are greater than others, some are even a bit longer. But God's grace

comes to us in ways we understand and recognise and need. Your children leading you back to the Church is not as important as the fact that you are back. This is an opportunity for you to renew, strengthen, and deepen your faith. Regardless of how we get to Church, or what draws us closer to God, the fact is we are there. Do what you need to do to get right with God and the Church. Go to confession, begin good family religious practices, and be involved in the ministries your parish offers. Be more

than a lukewarm parishioner. Be the kind of Catholic you want your children to be.



St. Rupert of Salzburg is also known as the "Apostle of

## Saint of the Week

Bavaria and Austria." Although mostly legend, it is believed that he was born sometime around 660 in Gaul, which is now part of France. It is possible that he is a descendant of the Merovingian royal line. Not much is known about the saint's early life.

We do know that Rupert was first appointed as Bishop of Worms in present-day Germany and despite many good works there, the pagan population eventually beat him and forced him from the city. Rupert retired

to Rome for a time until Duke Theodo of Bavaria asked him to come to help establish the Church more firmly in Bavaria. Rupert agreed and brought with him a group of priests. Rupert traveled the region, effecting conversions, miracles, healing.

Eventually Rupert chose to settle at Juvavum an old Roman city mostly in ruins. He renamed the city Salzburg or "Salt Castle," and established there a great cathedral and monastery under the Rule of St. Bene-

dict. His niece became abbess of the Benedictine convent he founded nearby. Rupert was the first bishop of Salzburg, serving also as abbot of the monastery.

St. Rupert is usually portrayed carrying a vessel of salt, as he helped establish the salt mining industry for which he named the city. It is said that Rupert died on Easter Sunday though sources disagree on the year, which could have been around 710 or possibly as late as 718.

## Flock Notes

Aid boxes from the back of church. Please note that numbers have changed this year so make sure you take the right box. Thanks for your generosity! If you have any problems or questions please contact Ken Devlin on 07719904073.

**Irish Centre Musicians**

Irish musical afternoon after 12.05 Mass on Monday, 28 March. There be refreshments and everyone is welcome

154 Parishioners handed in Pledges during Stewardship Sunday. Thank-you! It is amazing to see such an outpouring of generosity and talent in the parish. In the next few weeks you'll be hearing from a member of the Parish Stewardship Committee to help you get started ministering.

What was also clear from the stewardship forms was

how many parishioners are already engaged in so many ministries. Thank-you! Your faithfulness and dedication, often unseen, is a blessing to the parish!

Stewardship is an attitude that underpins our discipleship. Everything we have, without exception, is a gift from God. We hold it on his behalf and one day he will call us to account for the

gifts he has given, just like the the stewards in the parable.

Have a read again through the Parish Handbook and see if Jesus is calling you to serve him in new ways. Stewardship Sunday may have passed the task of being good stewards continues.



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