

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT – 30 MARCH 2025



## 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,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

## READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

Jesus' interaction with the man born blind explores the rich symbol of light and has for centuries been used in connection with Christian initiation. It is assigned to the Fourth Sunday of Lent in Year A but can always be chosen for this Sunday, especially if there are adults to be initiated at Easter. Year A texts are found at the end of the book.

On the other hand, the Year C cycle gives us the opportunity to hear one of the best-loved and most well-known stories of the gospels: the prodigal son. Those who are accustomed to telling their children a bedtime story will appreciate the power of retelling a familiar story. The text becomes so embedded in the mind and heart, that the parent who tries to skip a paragraph or change a word will be sternly corrected by their two-year old!

In the same way, we should not be afraid of very well-known Gospel parables. Each time the story of the prodigal son is told, it can be nuanced a little differently. But more importantly, as the familiar phrase approaches, the listener anticipates it. We are waiting for the moment the father goes running towards his younger son, cutting off his prepared speech with an embrace and gestures of welcome. We wait for the moment when the father goes outside to talk to the faithful but resentful older son. Enjoy the retelling!

### **A reading from the book of Joshua 5:9–12**

The Lord said to Joshua, 'Today I have taken the shame of Egypt away from you.'

The Israelites pitched their camp at Gilgal and kept the Passover there on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening in the plain of Jericho. On the morrow of the Passover they tasted the produce of that country, unleavened bread and roasted ears of corn, that same day. From that time, from their first eating of the produce of that country, the manna stopped falling. And having manna no longer, the Israelites fed from that year onwards on what the land of Canaan yielded.

### **First Reading**

Moses, who led the people out of bondage in Egypt and journeyed with them for forty years in the desert, dies within sight of the land of milk and honey. Joshua takes over and leads the people into the promised land of Canaan. They no longer need God's gift of manna; they can be fed from the fruit of the land. As they celebrated the first Passover meal on the eve of their departure from Egypt, so now they celebrate their entry into Canaan with a Passover meal.

Scholars debate to what extent all this is actually historical. But it is powerfully symbolic. In this brief reading, there is a wonderful sense of accomplishment as God's promise is fulfilled. A celebratory tone is appropriate for this brief text.

### **Responsorial Psalm**

**Ps 33:2–7**

**R.** Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

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. **R.**

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.**

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. **R.**

### **Responsorial Psalm**

Psalm 33/34 responds to the Joshua reading by affirming that God is good. God listens to us when we call and rescues us from terrors and distress. We respond to this affirmation by joyously praising and glorifying God.

'Taste and see...' is an unusual metaphor, despite its familiarity. It refers to the eating of the first reading and reminds us of the Eucharist where we are fed by word and sacrament.

There is a dimension of social justice enshrined in the words as the psalmist states that the humble shall hear and be glad, and the poor person will be rescued from distress. Our praise of God is not self-congratulatory; rather, as God cares for us, so we care for one another.

The more gladly and prayerfully the verses are prayed, the more likely that the assembly's response will be made in the same spirit.

**A reading from the second letter of St Paul  
to the Corinthians 5:17–21**

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

**A reading from the holy Gospel  
according to Luke 15:1–3, 11–32**

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man,' they said, 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he spoke this parable to them:

'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;

**Second Reading**

*Freed at last from the wound of corruption and made fully into a new creation, we shall sing to you with gladness the thanksgiving of Christ...* These are the final words of the first Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation. They resonate perfectly with this text from Paul in which he speaks of Christ's work of reconciliation. We are called to accept this God-given gift. Then we are to be ambassadors for this work for reconciliation by promoting harmony and unity between people and between the human race and God.

Readers might reflect on this Eucharistic Prayer from the Missal and encourage the parish liturgy committee to select it for use at Mass on this day.

**Gospel**

Christ welcomes sinners and eats with them. Thus he manifests God's unending and unconditional love and forgiveness for all. This is the thrust of the parable.

The father is unbelievable. He must have known his younger son would come unstuck, yet he divides his estate for him.

When the boy comes to his senses and returns to confess, the father runs out to meet him and embraces him without setting any conditions. He has been waiting and watching for his return. The parable speaks of it as a resurrection. The return is cause not for recrimination but for celebration.

Finally, when the elder son is angry and offended, the father goes out to plead with him, begging him to let go of his resentment. The father assures him too of his unconditional love.

Like all good stories, the outcome is open-ended. This gives the hearer the opportunity to engage with its message. It is sometimes hard to get our head and heart around the idea that God is not watching to catch us out, but is waiting for the slightest chance to forgive us and embrace us in love. It is beyond what we deserve or even imagine.

Enjoy the familiarity in telling this story.

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.

‘Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about, “Your brother has come” replied the servant “and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound.” He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, “Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening.”

‘The father said, “My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.”’

## CONCLUDING PRAYER

### Prayer over the People (Fourth Sunday of Lent)

Look upon those who call to you, O Lord,  
and sustain the weak;  
give life by your unfailing light  
to those who walk in the shadow of death,  
and bring those rescued by your mercy from every evil  
to reach the highest good.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

**Amen.**

(Adapted from the Prayer over the People for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, Roman Missal p. 272)

*An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.*

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

### FIRST READING ( NRSV)

#### **A reading from the book of Joshua 5:9, 10– 12**

After the Israelites had crossed over the Jordan river,  
and entered the promised land,  
the Lord said to Joshua,  
“Today I have rolled away from you  
the disgrace of Egypt.”

While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal  
they kept the Passover  
in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month  
in the plains of Jericho.

On the day after the Passover; on that very day,  
they ate the produce of the land,  
unleavened cakes and parched grain.  
The manna ceased on the day they ate  
the produce of the land,  
and the Israelites no longer had manna;  
they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM ( NRSV)

**Psalm 34.1-2, 3-4, 5-6 (R.8a)**

**R.** Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

I will bless the Lord at all times;  
his praise continually shall be in my mouth.  
My soul makes its boast in the Lord;  
let the humble hear and be glad. **R.**

O magnify the Lord with me,  
and let us exalt his name together.  
I sought the Lord, and he answered me,  
and delivered me from all my fears. **R.**

Look to him, and be radiant;  
so your faces shall never be ashamed.  
This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord,  
and was saved from every trouble. **R.**

## SECOND READING ( NRSV)

### A reading from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians 5:17–21

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:  
everything old has passed away;  
see, everything has become new!  
All this is from God,  
who reconciled us to himself through Christ,  
and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;  
that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself,  
not counting their trespasses against them,

So we are ambassadors for Christ,  
since God is making his appeal through us;  
we entreat you on behalf of Christ,  
be reconciled to God.

For our sake God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin,  
so that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God.

## GOSPEL ( NRSV)

### A reading from the gospel according to Luke 15:1–3, 11–32

All the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus.  
And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying,  
“This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

So he told them a parable:  
“There was a man who had two sons.  
The younger of them said to his father;  
‘Father: give me the share of the property  
that will belong to me.’  
So the father divided his property between them.

A few days later the younger son gathered all he had  
and travelled to a distant country,  
and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

“When he had spent everything,  
a severe famine took place throughout 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 to his fields to feed the pigs.  
The young man would gladly have filled himself  
with the pods that the pigs were eating;  
and no one gave him anything.

“But when he came to himself he said,  
‘How many of my father’s hired hands  
have bread enough and to spare,  
but here I am dying of hunger!

I will get up 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 like one of your hired hands.”

“So he set off and went to his father.  
But while he was still far off,  
his father saw him and was filled with compassion;  
he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

“Then 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 slaves,  
‘Quickly, bring out a robe – the best one – and put it on him;  
put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.  
And get the fatted calf and kill it,  
and let us eat and celebrate;  
for this son of mine was dead and is alive again;  
he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

“Now his elder son was in the field;  
and when he came and approached the house,  
he heard music and dancing.  
He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on.

The slave replied, ‘Your brother has come,  
and your father has killed the fatted calf,  
because he has got him back safe and sound.’

“Then the elder son became angry and refused to go in.  
His father came out and began to plead with him.  
But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years  
I have been working like a slave for you,  
and I have never disobeyed your command;  
yet you have never given me even a young goat  
so that I might celebrate with my friends.  
But when this son of yours came back,  
who has devoured your property with prostitutes,  
you killed the fatted calf for him!’

“Then the father said to him,  
‘Son, you are always with me,  
and all that is mine is yours.  
But we had to celebrate and rejoice,  
because this brother of yours was dead  
and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’