

QUESTIONS FOR THINKING AND TALKING

1. In Luke's story of a father and two sons, with which character are you best able to relate and why?
2. How do you understand God? When and where do you expect to encounter God in your life?
3. What are the key insights you will take into the coming week from this Gospel.

CLOSING PRAYER

May God bless us with eyes that see suffering in the world.
May God bless us with courage to seek justice and peace.
May God bless us with generosity to share what we have.
May God bless us with love to see Christ in each other.
Pray: The Sign of the Cross.

COMMITMENT FOR WEEK 4

Feast on non-resistance.
Fast from bitterness;
Feast on forgiveness.
Fast from self-concern;
Feast on compassion for others.
Fast from personal anxiety;
Feast on eternal truth.*



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Commitment prayer adapted from the Diocese of Rockhampton resources.
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Year of Luke

Fourth Week of Lent

GOSPEL: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The tax collectors and sinners, however, were all crowding round to listen to him, and the Pharisees and scribes complained saying, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he told them this parable:

Then he said, 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that will 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 himself with the husks the pigs were eating but no one would let him have them. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's hired men have all the food they want and more, 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 hired men." 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. 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 will celebrate by having a feast, 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. The servant told him, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the calf we had been fattening because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out and began to urge him to come in; but he retorted to his father, "All these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, 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 loose 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."'

INTRODUCTION

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

The prayer form called *lectio divina*, or 'Sacred Reading' of Scripture, is suggested to begin the session. This way of praying has ancient origins. Saint Benedict and many monastic communities followed this way.

Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)

Begin by acknowledging the presence of God with you.

Know that God is looking at you and loving you.

Ask for what your heart most deeply desires.

Read the passage. Then allow **silent time**.

Re-read the passage.

Pause if a word or phrase 'stands out' for you.

Stay with each for as long as you feel that you want to stay.

You may repeat the word or phrase gently.

You may stay with this Word of God for you, or move on.

You may read the text only once or return and re-read it.

It is 'OK' if you do not finish the reading.

Listen. Respond as the Spirit leads you.

Conclude with your own prayer

Reflect back on your prayer experience.

You may like to write or draw in a journal.

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This leaflet may be used by one person, or by a small group.

Personal use: You may like to set aside 20 – 45 minutes each week for prayer and reflection or allow time each day.

Group use: Allow 1 hour weekly for your group to meet in Lent.

- 1. Beginning Prayer**
Begin with the Sign of the Cross.
Read the Scripture passage aloud (*page 1*).
Allow 15 minutes of quiet time for each person to pray using the way of *lectio divina* (*below*). Read the passage again.
- 2. Sharing**
Invite each person to share an aspect of their prayer (*15 min*)
- 3. Questions for Thinking and Talking**
Allow quiet time for each question (*page 4*) before sharing insights with the group.
- 4. Closing prayer**

BACKGROUND

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The parable of a father and two sons is one of three concerned with losing and finding grouped together in Luke's Gospel; the lost sheep, the lost coin and lost sons. When the restless son asks for his share of his father's inheritance – it is as if his father is dead to him! In love the father grants the request and leaves him free to stay or go. When the son finds himself feeding pigs to survive, it is a great humiliation for a Jew. On coming to his senses, he is ready to come home and ask forgiveness. This father watches, waits and runs down the road to embrace and clothe his son with compassion, love and honour - as beloved son. There are no words of accusation, but celebration for a son, lost and found, who seemed to be dead and is alive again.

The father's worries are not over. Another son is lost to resentment and self pity. He has seen his relationship with his father in terms of worker and master and rewards. He does not know he is the beloved child of a loving parent. The father goes outside again to another lost son. His love and forgiveness has no limits. This father is like God.

Parables are stories with a question and a challenge for listeners. A lost son is reconciled with the father who celebrates and cannot stop loving. The elder son's resentment, alienates him from brother and father. We are left wondering; Will he also return to the parent who wants nothing but to love and welcome, always ready to forgive human failing? Another question arises for us. Do we know what God is like and how God feels about us? Where do we look for God? Can we cope with a God who loves extravagantly – who loves us as we are and loves those whom we choose to judge as less worthy?

