

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT



Your Children's Children

God of all generations,
from the beginning of time,
you have given your children
an abundance of gifts
and provided for their needs.
The Israelites were nourished
with the Passover meal,
and shared the produce of the land,
as they told the story of the covenant
in the land of Canaan.

We ask that you continue to bless
your elect with the Bread of Life, and
the story of your presence among
your people.

May our gathering around the ambo
and altar
sustain us, our children, and our
children's children.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sunday, March 31, 2019

Gifts of Love



Today's Readings: Joshua 5:9, 10–12; Psalm 34:2–3, 4, 5, 6–7; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Luke 15:1–3, 11–32. We hear in the Book of Joshua how the Lord takes care of all the needs of his people. They had relied upon manna sent as bread from heaven. Now they would eat from the produce of the land. Both the manna and the grain were gifts from God and provided nourishment for his children.

In the story of the prodigal son, it is easy to focus on the younger son, who takes his father's inheritance and squanders it on extravagant living. When he finds himself in a foreign land, alone and hungry, he finally realizes who he is and decides to return to his father to ask to be a hired

hand. When the son is within eyesight, the father runs to him and embraces him with compassionate love. No matter what the son has done, he is welcomed home.

But what about the older son, who does not appreciate the love that the father showed to his younger son? The older son confronts his father since he is upset about the excessive love showered on the younger brother, who is given sandals, a robe, a ring, and a party for his friends. The father in this parable offers both of his sons his love. That is his gift to them. He invites them both to participate in the celebration. During this Lent, remember that the Lord always looks forward to the return of his children.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, April 1 God's Grace

The royal official trusts so much in the word Jesus speaks, that he returned home sure that his daughter would be well. Jesus gave him the opportunity to have faith without seeing. When we come to Jesus with our desires, we do not always get an immediate response to our requests. Often when our prayers are answered, they take us in a direction that we may not have anticipated. Pray today that you may trust where God's grace is leading you. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 65:17–21; Psalm 30:2, 4, 5–6, 11–13; John 4:43–54.*

Tuesday, April 2 Healing the Isolation

The man who had been sick for thirty-eight years holds out hope that he will be cured, even though he has no one to help him. His hope is fulfilled when Jesus encounters the man at that place of healing. Have you ever been isolated because you needed help? Can you offer assistance or support to the aged or sick who live near you this Lent? Something as simple as bringing a smile, reading a story, or taking someone for a walk can help them feel less alone. *Today's Readings: Ezekiel 47:1–9, 12; Psalm 46:2–3, 5–6, 8–9; John 5:1–3, 5–16.*

Wednesday, April 3 The Work of the Father

“My Father is at work until now, and I am at work as well.” When Jesus told the Pharisees this, they were only angered at what they considered blasphemy. God continues to work, even on the Sabbath. How are we called to be collaborators in the work of God? Reflect on how you can practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy to continue the work of God. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 49:8–15; Psalm 145:8–9, 13–15, 17–18; John 5:17–30.*

Thursday, April 4 The Word of God

Today's Gospel continues Jesus' response to those who are not open to hearing his words. Do you ever shut yourself off from the power of the Word of God? This week, be intentional about sitting quietly with his Word, allowing the Word of God to enter your heart. Pay attention to words or phrases that strike you. Write that word or phrase in your Lenten journal. How can you continue to think about that Scripture verse this week? *Today's Readings: Exodus 32:7–14; Psalm 106:19–20, 21–22, 23; John 5:31–47.*

Friday, April 5 Prepare Your Heart

The crowd in Jerusalem cannot seem to agree. They either know everything about Jesus or they do not know anything about him. It is easy to limit ourselves by making an assumption or jumping to a conclusion. Sometimes, too, decisions are rationalized. Prepare your heart by participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation or by seeking a spiritual director who is available to pray with you, challenge you, and help you to see how God is calling you. *Today's Readings: Wisdom 2:1, 12–22; Psalm 34:17–18, 19–20, 21, 23; John 7:1–2, 10, 25–30.*

Saturday, April 6 Open Your Heart

Have you ever been with a group in which each person holds a different opinion? As they attempt to speak and argue their point, confusion and frustration ensues. The Gospel today speaks about division, because the Jewish leaders were judging Jesus. We do not have to look very far to see division and conflict in our communities and even our parishes and families. Let us pray to have an open mind and heart to the thoughts of others. Let us not close ourselves to the presence of Christ in the heart of someone whose opinion differs from ours. *Today's Readings: Jeremiah 11:18–20; Psalm 7:2–3, 9–10, 11–12; John 7:40–53.*

