

4th Sunday of Lent

Joshua 5:9-12
Ps 34:2-7
2 Corinthians 5:17-21
Luke 15:1-3,11-32

Monday April 1

Isaiah 65:17-21
Ps 30:2,4-6,11-13
John 4:43-54

Tuesday April 2

Ezekiel 47:1-9,12
Ps 46:2-3,5-6,8-9
John 5:1-16

Wednesday April 3

Isaiah 49:8-15
Ps 145:8-9,13-14,17-18
John 5:17-30

Thursday April 4

Exodus 32:7-14
Ps 106:19-23
John 5:31-47

Friday April 5

Wisdom 2:1a,12-22
Ps 34:17-21,23
John 7:1-2,10,25-30

Saturday April 6

Jeremiah 11:18-20
Ps 7:2-3,9-12
John 7:40-53

Who is worthy to receive the love and unconditional forgiveness of God? During every Mass, we pray, "Lord, I am not worthy... but say the Word and my soul shall be healed." Jesus shows us in the Gospel reading that we are all worthy -- not because of what we do, rather because of what Jesus *did* do: He died on the cross to take our sins into death so that we can rise up with him in the perpetual Easter experience of unity with God.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, it's not what the son did that made his return home acceptable. It's not his repentance that made him worthy of receiving his father's love. It's what the father did. He loved his child. Unconditionally. He loved him even while he was far away, even while he was straying in a sinful lifestyle.



Next, we listen to the Word that heals our broken relationships with God. Jesus is speaking to you through his Holy Spirit; listen in your heart. Jesus, the Word made flesh, is responding to your presence at Mass.

In the Offertory, we offer ourselves to the Father; it's our surrender: "I do not deserve to be called your child, so do with me as you will." What God wills is for us to be restored to a fully loving, give-and-take relationship with him and his family. And thus, in the grandest moment of the Liturgy, we receive the Eucharist as a gift of unity with God and with his whole family, the Church. (Those who cannot receive the Communion of the Host and Cup are graced with a Spiritual Communion.)

Reflect & Discuss:

1. In what ways do you feel like a prodigal child? Do you feel separated from God to any degree? What sins do you need to confess so that you can turn around and head back home? Your Father is waiting with open arms!
2. Describe a Prodigal Son type of experience. Are you waiting for a lost child or friend to return to the Church or to your love?
3. In what way have you been the child running away from God? What made you decide to return home? How did God receive you back? What convinced you that his love is unconditional and always available?

The dad's love was his gift to the son even while the son was rejecting it. The gift that the son gave to his dad upon his return home was an open heart to receive the love that had always been available.

During every Mass, we come to church as prodigal children. It doesn't matter that we think we've been good Christians all week long. In some way or other, we have turned our backs on God's full, unconditional, faithful love. This is why we always start Mass acknowledging that we have sinned. Let's take this opportunity very seriously!