

## Fourth Week of Lent-CAMINO

27<sup>th</sup> March 2022-Fourth Sunday of Lent



It is rather fitting that we are halfway through Lent and can celebrate ‘Laetare Sunday’; it was that time when people took a break from the fasting of the season and had a celebration. In our culture, it is also known as ‘Mothering Sunday’ when Christians went on pilgrimage to the place of their baptism—their ‘mother’ community. In Medieval times, it was a chance for parishioners to gather at their diocesan Cathedral, their ‘mother’ church, as a symbol of unity. Today, the emphasis is rightly on our own mothers—those who brought us into the world and gave us life. I hope you can spend time with your own mothers, even if it must be over Zoom—you can tell them how much you love them. If like me, you have lost your mum, then pray with her on this day; safely light a candle and recall all your happy memories. If your parish is wealthy enough you might notice that your priest and deacon are dressed in pink vestments today, symbolic of the Church joining in the celebration--I am assured that the vestments are ROSE coloured and not pink! So, today is a unique day in the year to give thanks for mothering itself, perhaps for ‘Mother Church’, and for our own mothers. We must acknowledge this is a day on which some people find coming to church at all difficult in the best of times, never mind during the worries of a pandemic. For some women – and men too – this day underlines their silent, personal griefs and sorrows. Quiet tears will be shed by many on this day: tears for children who have died, tears for children who have rejected their parents, tears for the relationships that never happened, tears for the children that never were. There will also be tears for mothers who have loved and been loved and are now sorely missed, but there

will also be tears for some mothers who may have loved too much and for some who have not loved at all. All in all, a day of mixed emotions. Mothering Sunday is a day to honour and celebrate all those who have provided mothering – in its widest sense – in our lives. Even those people who may have had difficult relationships with their own mothers will nonetheless know those people – both women and men – who have been their companions, who have influenced, supported, nourished, and guided them in their lives. Today is that day to give thanks for those friends who have very much become our family, who have stood by us, like Mary the mother of Jesus, in the most difficult and trying of circumstances. Their care and love will always be appreciated.



Today we are presented with, what is arguably, one of the most popular parables ever told: the story of the Lost Son, or the story of the Faithful Brother, or the story of the Loving Father. It is a parable so famous and engrained in our psyche that we almost know it off by heart. It is the third parable of loss in a series of three that Luke presents: the Lost Sheep (Lk 15:4-7), the Lost Coin (Lk 15:8-10), and the Lost Son (Lk 15:11-32)—each parable forces us to think about what is important and what counts in our lives. Luke places this trilogy of parables in the general context of Jesus being with the undesirables—the ones very much rejected by the Pharisees and scribes. They complain that Jesus not only ‘welcomes’ these public sinners, but also ‘eats with them’ (Lk 15: 3). Thus, the parables are directed at these leaders in an

attempt, by Jesus, to get them to reflect on the immensity of God's love that is not limited, but available for all. We know what the younger son did with his share and what a failure he became; we know his lonely journey back to his father; we know his heartfelt attempts to make reconciliation; we know all about the totality of the father's love for BOTH his sons—even in the face of the older boy's anger and bitterness. It reminds us that none of us should ever limit the love of God; no matter how many pages of scripture we read or how many hours we spend at the prayer group; no matter how many rosaries we say, or novenas we make. We do not have the right to say who is worthy of God's love; Jesus told this parable so long ago and yet, so often, we just do not understand the depth of God's love for everyone, not the ones that I pick and choose.

I love Rembrandt's great painting, 'The Return of the Prodigal'; the artist gives a theology lesson through his use of colour, lighting and symbols used, but let us zone in on the hands of the Father in the painting:



The prodigal son is held warm in the embrace of the father; he is safe and that he is loved. Look closely at the hands: on the left we see a slim, slender hand that could be feminine, while the right hand is broader and indicates masculinity. The son is embraced by the gift of love—love from a loving mother and a loving father. We need to share that love of unconditional acceptance and not limit God's love; the Church of God is far too precious to allow it to become judgmental and limiting. We need to constantly thank God for giving us a Holy Father who reminds us often:

God always waits for us, he does not get tired, he does not lose heart. Because it is us, each of us is that reunited son, that rediscovered coin, that caressed sheep that he puts back on his shoulder. He waits every day for us to notice his love. And you say, "But I've done many horrible things, I've done too many!" Don't be afraid: God loves you, loves you as you are and knows that only his love can change your life. (Pope Francis: Angelus Message 15/09/2019)

**Today: who do you count as important in your life-remember them in prayer; get in touch and remind them just how special they are**

We can pray: Dear God, You know our hearts, you hear our prayers, and care about all that concerns us. You understand the burden we carry and how we want, more than anything, to see our loved ones come to you. Help us to remember that you love them more than we ever could. And you desire to extend your great love and forgiveness, your mercy and hope. Thank you that nothing is too difficult for you. Thank you that your power is unlimited, and you came to set the captives free. Thank you that you wait, arms open, for the prodigal to return, that you look for his arrival to lavishly celebrate that he's come home. We praise you for you are Redeemer and Rescuer, Saviour and Lord. We know and believe that there's no pit so deep that your love can't reach us still. We understand that your mercies are new every morning, and your faithfulness is great. (Debbie McDaniel)

### **28<sup>th</sup> March 2022-Monday**

In the gospel today, we see Jesus back in Cana, the place of his first miracle, No doubt he was well remembered there given what he had done. In John's gospel that first miracle is not one of curing serious illness or calming great storms; the first miracle recorded in John is a miracle of fun, laughter and total generosity: ordinary water is transformed into gallons of the best wine. The people have real cause to remember him, perhaps hoping that he might repeat it! Although he was rejected up in Nazareth, **'the Galileans received him well, having seen all that he done in Jerusalem'**. One might say that his fame preceded him.

In desperation, a court official wants his son to be made better, no doubt hearing that Jesus did more than just do magic with water. In the simple exchange, Jesus shows that he wants the absolute best for the sick son as he

proclaims, **'your son will live'**--Jesus wants to share the totality of life. He does not even have to visit the home, as the servants come rushing to tell the father that the boy is cured and is well again. The official comes to believe in Jesus, **'and he and all his household believed'**. This is the impact of coming to fully know Jesus, to appreciate him more than just a bringer of **'signs and portents.'** Jesus is the one who brings us to the fullness of life and this time of Lent helps to open us up to the treasures that Jesus is offering. A good bottle of vintage 'Chateauneuf du Pape' is a lovely gift, but Jesus is offering far more, if our hearts are open to receive.

**Today open your hearts to the gifts that God is offering you: recognise God's life and love in every moment of your day.**

We can pray: **To our brothers and sisters who have contracted and are suffering due to the Coronavirus Disease, we pray that God's healing hand may rest upon you. To medical doctors, nurses and the supporting staff who are in the frontline of the fight against COVID-19, may the Good Lord sustain you and inspire you to render your life-saving services with due care, love and compassion. To all those who have lost their loved ones due to the Coronavirus outbreak, we convey our deepest sympathies. We pray that their souls, through God's mercy, may rest in eternal peace. We pray that God may grant all bereaved families his consolation and strengthen their faith and hope in Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord.** (Prayer adapted from the 2020 Easter Message of the Catholic Bishops of Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe).



### **29<sup>th</sup> March 2022-Tuesday**

Today we find Jesus back in Jerusalem again in the Sheep Pool, a place associated with healing. On the sabbath day he meets a man who **'had an illness that lasts thirty-eight years'**; Jesus asks the obvious question, **'do you want to be well again?'** and gets an unusual response. The man needs to be put in the water while the water is disturbed, but he has no family or friends to

support him and get him to the water—he is not only sick, but he is alone. One of the greatest curses our modern society, with all its wonderful methods of social communication, is that so many people are alone. In this time of pandemic, that feeling of loneliness can be amplified and made even worse—it is essential that we regularly check in on family members and friends who live on their own in these days. Jesus does not carry him to the pool, instead he offers complete healing, **‘get up, pick up your sleeping-mat and walk.’**

As this act of healing took place on the sabbath day, the Jewish thought police are in straight away with their condemnation as they see the man walking away, carrying his sleeping mat. They are more concerned that he is breaking some obscure sabbath law, than they are about the miracle and the huge difference it will make in the life of this man: thirty-eight years of pain, humiliation and grief is over in a moment, yet these people want to keep him imprisoned in his guilt. We are all adept at using the ‘guilt card’ when we want to get our own way; today’s gospel is an encouragement to go to the Lord with our own problems and sickness—problems and illness that are not always obvious to the eye. When you feel that you are being hounded for trying to do the best you can, often in confusing circumstances, remember that you are in good company. It was because of this outreach of help that John says that the people **‘began to persecute Jesus’**.

**Today: check in with someone who is really alone; affirm them of your support. You might not have to carry them to the sheep pool, but you can offer your time.**

We can pray: **Father God, many of us need healing. I need healing for past hurts, random physical pains that I allow to waylay my days and Spiritual healing for various reasons. I reach up to You to receive this healing so that I may be whole and that I may be able to then serve others in a way that brings You fullness of glory. Show others Your healing power so that they may also be healed and walk in wholeness. In the precious name of Jesus. Amen! (Dawn Mast)**

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhirAYf29VE>



(Mission Bible Class)

### 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022—Wednesday

In the first reading from Isaiah, we can reflect on the **‘day of salvation.’** The prophet urges his people to ‘come out’ from the darkness that can be caused by sin and failure. In this time of Lent, we will have the opportunity to receive the sacrament of reconciliation—to receive the unconditional care and love of God. During the height of the pandemic, before the vaccination was fully available, we were unable to have that comfort of the sacrament. In basking in this love, we will **‘never hunger or thirst.’** The prophet sees all the nations coming to enjoy that light of God’s goodness. We are reminded that no one is excluded from that ultimate love: **‘some are on their way from afar, others from the north and the west, other from the land of Sinim.’** Isaiah uses one of the most powerful images when talking of the love of God: can you imagine a mother forgetting a baby? It is not possible! ‘Yet even if these forget,’ God tells you, ‘I will never forget you.’

Today: reach out to someone living in darkness—bring them your light



Watch and reflect: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=05d91wAzs9k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05d91wAzs9k)

We can pray: **Lord, help me to hear you saying, "I am your hope" over all the other voices. Lord, your word says, you are the hope for hopeless so I'm running to you with both hands stretched out and grabbing on to you. Fill me up with hope and give me a tangible reminder today that hope is an unbreakable spiritual lifeline (Hebrews 6:19-20). God, you know those things in my heart that I barely dare to hope for, today I give them to you, I trust them to you, and ask that you take them because I know that you can do more than I could ever guess, imagine or request in wildest dreams (Eph 3:20). God, you are my hope and I trust you. Amen.**

### **31<sup>st</sup> March 2022-Thursday**

Our gospel today is taken from John's deep reflection on light and truth; Jesus reflects on the ministry of John the Baptist, embraced by so many as they went out into the desert to find peace and forgiveness, yet rejected by the leadership even though, '**John was lamp alight and shining**'. Jesus speaks a truth that is even greater than John's; he has been sent by the Father and Jesus becomes the voice of God. In this passage we see the reality of incarnation once again because '**you have never seen his shape.**' Those who refuse to believe in the mission and teaching of Jesus cannot see that he is the fulfilment of scripture— '**you do not believe in the one he has sent.**' We are lucky as we have read the end of the story in a way that these contemporaries of Jesus were unable to. However, do we always act in a way that shows that we are true daughters and sons of the light? Will my actions and words today, show that I am a Christian?

**Today: be there for another in need.**

We can pray: **Strengthen, O God, your Church in the sacraments of your grace, that we, in union with the teaching and prayers of your servant Cyril of Jerusalem, may enter more fully into your Paschal mystery, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God, now and forever. Amen.**



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1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 - Friday

Today, in the gospel, we see Jesus in his home area as **‘he could not stay in Judaea, because they were out to kill him.’** However, he makes the move south to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. It was also called Feast of Booths, or Sukkot in Hebrew, and was the seventh and final feast commanded in the Torah. In addition, it served as the third of three yearly occasions when all Jewish men were to appear before the Lord to worship (see: Deuteronomy 16:16). It began just five days after the Day of Atonement, shortly after the completion of the fall harvest period. The time marked a celebration of the harvest as well as a remembrance of God's provision during Israel's 40 years in the wilderness living in tents or tabernacles. This feast was also important for another reason—the tithe. Thousands of travelers attended the feast for eight days each year, bringing a tenth of their harvest for worship. As a result of Christ's coming to earth to dwell among us, we can enter the Lord's rest through faith in Jesus. Through the gift of incarnation, Jesus is the ‘tabernacle’ among us. The law has been fulfilled in Christ and made complete in Him, offering us the opportunity to have God's Spirit dwell within us each day.

Aware of the animosity against him by the powerful religious leaders, Jesus goes to the temple without fuss. However, the glory of God cannot be

hidden—even the crowds are confused: **‘here he is, speaking freely, and they have nothing to say to him!’** They could not seem to accept that the Messiah was one among them, but the reality of incarnation is that he is one with them. He can claim, **‘there is one who sent me, and I really come from him, but I know Him because I have come from him and it was He who sent me.’**

**Today: spend some time in private prayer, aware that the Lord is with you—your home can be a tabernacle of the Lord too.**

**We can pray: God, I confess my sins to You and turn away from them** (tell

God any sin you know is in your life and confess it to Him

with a sincere heart. Ask Him to show you any other areas

that needs His cleansing). **Thank You, God, for freely**

**forgiving me. As I turn away from my sin, I turn toward You,**

**and I offer myself to You:**

- **I give You my tongue, to speak good and not evil**
- **I give You my eyes, to focus on You and the needs of others**
- **I give You my ears, to be sensitive to Your voice**
- **I give You my hands, to do good for others**
- **I give You my feet, to walk in Your ways and follow Your footsteps**
- **I give You my mind, to be transformed and used by You**

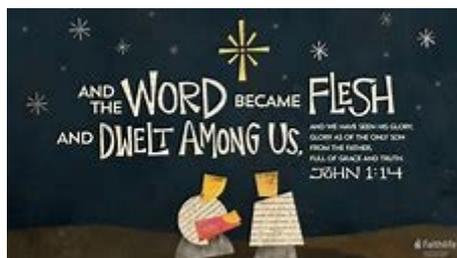


Image: ©Biblescreen.com

## **2<sup>nd</sup> April 2022-Saturday**

In our gospel today, John gives the reactions of those who listen to Jesus; it ranges from, **‘surely he must be the prophet’** to **‘he is the Christ’** with others wondering, not without a hint of condescension, **‘would the Christ be from Galilee?’** The temple authorities are annoyed that even their police service,

tasked with arresting Jesus from Galilee, seem to be taken in by his words: **'there has never been anybody else who has spoken like him.'** Again, we meet the wise Nicodemus who reminds them of the need for due process, as **'the Law does not allow us to pass judgement on a person without giving them a HEARING.'** Nicodemus gets to the heart of the matter: the crowds and even the temple police, have LISTENED to what Jesus has to say; his words speak to their hearts, and they understand that those words are put into action.

So many times, we hear of people ending up in prison, or even on death row, because they have not been fully listened to. In the same way, we have often ignored our children and vulnerable members of society as they have tried to articulate their problems and concerns. Are you content to judge somebody on the basis of hearsay and tittle-tattle? This happens far too often, and many innocent people can be stuck with repercussions of such lazy thinking. Often it is because I refuse to face up to my own mistakes and inadequacy and choose another to pin my problems on. It is a form of bullying and that can never be accepted in any society that calls itself 'Christian'. Last year I was deeply impressed by a letter from a former pupil of mine: he wanted to get in touch with another student whom he bullied; now as an adult and a father himself, he realised that such behaviour was unacceptable. I was impressed that, years later, he wanted to do something positive and make a real difference in his life. With the other former pupil's permission, I was able to help them contact each other and begin a healing process that is still going on. We need to resolve to face up to the issues that are of our own making and not conveniently pass the buck to another.

**Today: honestly face your life and apologise if you have bullied another.**

We can pray: **Holy Father, Your Word says that we are to treat people in the way that we want to be treated. We confess that we will practice this command and be kind and fair. We will be good friends and tell an adult when someone is being mean to another person. We will not push, shove, or fight. We declare that You, Lord will be the light and salvation for those who are being bullied and mistreated so they will not have to be afraid. We declare that God, we ask that Your angels protect those people who are being bullied wherever they go. We declare that You, will rescue those who love You and will protect those who trust in Your Name.** (A children's prayer for those who are being bullied)



be a friend

For children:

Jesus said:  
**I AM** the  
**light**  
of the  
**world**  
John 9v5

