

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT**  
**Cycle C**

**FIRST READING**

God reconciled us to himself through Christ.

A reading from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians

5:17-19

Brothers and sisters:

Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person.

The past is forgotten,  
and everything is new.

God has done it all!

He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us,  
and he has given us the work of making peace  
between himself and others.

What we mean is that God was in Christ,  
offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world.  
And he has given us the work of sharing his message about peace.

The word of the Lord.



**RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

85:8, 9, 10

*R. (9b) The Lord speaks of peace to his people.*

*I will listen to you, Lord God,  
because you promise peace  
to those who are faithful  
and no longer foolish.*

*R. The Lord speaks of peace to his people.*

*You are ready to rescue  
everyone who worships you,  
so that you will live with us  
in all your glory.*

*R. The Lord speaks of peace to his people.*

*Love and loyalty  
will come together;  
goodness and peace  
will unite.*

*R. The Lord speaks of peace to his people.*

**VERSE BEFORE THE GOSPEL**

Luke 15:18

*R. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

*I will rise and go to my father and tell him:  
Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.*

*R. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*



## GOSPEL

Your brother here was dead and has come to life.

† A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke

15:1-3, 11b-32

Tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus.

So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling,  
“This man is friendly with sinners.  
He even eats with them.”

Then Jesus told them this story:

“Once a man had two sons.  
The younger son said to his father,  
‘Give me my share of the property.’  
So the father divided his property between his two sons.

“Not long after that,  
the younger son packed up everything he owned  
and left for a foreign country,  
where he wasted all his money in wild living.  
He had spent everything,  
when a bad famine spread through that whole land.  
Soon he had nothing to eat.

“He went to work for a man in that country,  
and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs.  
He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating,  
but no one gave him a thing.

“Finally, he came to his senses and said,  
‘My father’s workers have plenty to eat,  
and here I am, starving to death!  
I will leave and go to my father and say to him,  
‘Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you.’





I am no long good enough to be called your son.  
Treat me like one of your workers.”

“The younger son got up and started back to his father.  
But when he was still a long way off,  
his father saw him and felt sorry for him.  
He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

“The son said,  
‘Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you.  
I am no longer good enough to be called your son.’

“But his father said to the servants,  
‘Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him.  
Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet.  
Get the best calf and prepare it,  
so we can eat and celebrate.  
This son of mine was dead,  
but has now come back to life.  
He was lost and has now been found.’  
And they began to celebrate.

“The older son had been out in the field.  
But when he came near the house,  
he heard the music and dancing.  
So he called one of the servants over and asked,  
‘What’s going on here?’

“The servant answered,  
‘Your brother has come home safe and sound,  
and your father ordered us to kill the best calf.’  
The older brother got so mad  
that he would not even go into the house.

“His father came out and begged him to go in.



But he said to his father,  
‘For years I have worked for you like a slave  
and have always obeyed you.  
But you have never even given me a little goat,  
so that I could give a dinner for my friends.  
This other son of yours wasted your money on bad women.  
And now that he has come home,  
you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast.’

“His father replied,  
“My son, you are always with me,  
and everything I have is yours.  
But we should be glad and celebrate!  
Your brother was dead,  
but he is now alive.  
He was lost and has now been found.’ “

The gospel of the Lord.





**FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT**  
**Cycle C**

**Reading:** Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32

**Reflection/Discussion:**

This Gospel story is a favorite among Christians.

**Why do you think it is?** *Give children a chance to respond. Listen for what they might say that will give you an opening to make the following points:*

- The father in the story reminds us of what we believe about God, the Father: he never gives up on us (“when the son was still a **long way off**, the father saw him and felt sorry for him.”) The father, like God, wants to let his son know he is forgiven and is welcomed back to his father’s arms and to his family home. The father doesn’t hold his son’s sins against him. That’s why he doesn’t listen to the young man when he says he is not worthy to be his son.
- The son is foolish and hurts his father by leaving his family and wasting all his money. When we are foolish and hurt others, we are happy to remember a story such as this one that reminds us that God never stops loving us.

The first sentence in today’s Gospel tells us who were some of the people to whom Jesus was telling this story: “tax collectors and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, ‘This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them.’”

**Do you think the sinners were happy to hear this story? Why?**

**What about the people who were grumbling about Jesus and complaining that he was friendly with sinners? Do they remind you of anyone in the story?** *Right! The older brother who did not want to celebrate his younger brother’s return.*

Jesus tells us that the father in the story went outside to talk to his older son and beg him to come in and celebrate that his brother was alive and safe back home.

**What do you think Jesus was trying to say to the grumblers who didn’t like him or the people he hung around with?**



Jesus wanted the grumblers to know that God loves good people, but God also wants good people to be good to others, even to the people that the good people think are bad. Often, when we are nice to someone who has done something wrong, we give them a chance to say they are sorry and to be better people. This is what God does when God forgives us before we even ask for forgiveness. This is what Jesus did when he invited sinners to spend time with him.

**Was someone ever nice to you even when you had done something wrong? Did their kindness help you be a better person? Have you ever seen your parents or grandparents be kind to someone who had made a mistake? Could you tell if it helped the person be better?**

**Activity:**

**Materials:** A twig with a number of branches. Anchor it in a pot of sand or soil or rocks. OR use a potted plant that has a lot of branches. Even an artificial one is fine.

A length of yellow ribbon for each child.

*Ask the class if they know the story of why we sometimes tie yellow ribbons around trees, fences, and lamp posts when we want to welcome someone back home. (the lyrics to Tie and Yellow Ribbon are below) Briefly tell the children the song's story about a person who had been away for three years—in prison, in the army or somewhere out of touch—and s/he wrote a letter asking if s/he was still welcome to come home. The sign of welcome s/he asked for was a yellow ribbon tied around the old oak tree in the front yard. What s/he found as the bus drove up to the house were hundreds of yellow ribbons!*

*Distribute a piece of yellow ribbon to each child. Then ask: **Is there someone you need to forgive so they will know you are happy to have them be a part of your life?** Give them time to consider the question.*

**OR Is there someone you want to forgive you for your mistakes?**

**Let's pray for those we forgive and for those we want to forgive us and then we will tie a ribbon on the branch as a sign of our prayers for a new life together.**





## Prayer

**Leader:** God, our Father, help me always believe that you love me and want to help me even when I do wrong. And God bless the people who forgive me when I have hurt them. **AMEN.**

Jesus, help me to have a big heart like yours so I can forgive people who hurt me or disappoint me. I pray that my forgiveness will help them be better persons. AMEN.

Holy Spirit, help me know when and how to say I am sorry so I can help people forgive me and we can be happy together. **AMEN.**

*Invite the children to tie a ribbon on a branch. Then give each a hug to remind them that God loves them. Tell them to pass on the hug!*

Children's Liturgy shared by the Adorers of the Blood of Christ  
[www.adorers.org](http://www.adorers.org)

