

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT



We Return

God our Father,
your compassion knows no bounds.
You hear us cry out to you
and you save us from distress.
We have sinned against you
and no longer deserve your mercy;
we find ourselves lost,
yet we return to you.
Grant us strength to repent, to return
to you,
and to share with others the
everlasting joy
of your mercy and forgiveness.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 30, 2025

The Lord Hears



Today's readings: Joshua 5:9a, 10–12; Psalm 34:2–3, 4–5, 6–7; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Luke 15:1–3, 11–32 (33). When reflecting on today's Gospel, we are often encouraged to consider the loving father's unconditional love for both of his sons. The younger son asks his father for his inheritance and foolishly wastes it, inevitably finding himself in dire need. He decides to return home and apologize to his father, expecting to be treated like one of his father's hired workers. Despite the younger son's selfish recklessness, his father is "filled with compassion" upon his return. His father rejoices, dresses him in fine clothes, and prepares a feast. Certainly, Jesus is encouraging us to return to God, who has unending love and mercy for us despite our sinfulness.

Having experienced God's goodness and boundless mercy, we rejoice. Joining the psalmist, we sing: "When the poor one called out, the Lord heard, / and from all his distress he saved him." It is important, though, to reflect on both the times we find ourselves living as the younger son and the older son. When have you found yourself acting selfishly, unsettled in worldly desires and neglecting those in your community? When have you found yourself acting out of jealousy, comparing your blessings and actions to another's? Spend time praying with today's parable, trying to approach it free of judgment. What can you do when you find yourself acting like either of the sons? How can you call out to the Lord and return to God? How can you resolve to do better?



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This Week at Home

Monday, March 31

**Oscar Arnulfo Romero,
Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, died 1980**

On this date in 1980 Bishop Romero was slain at the altar while presiding at the Lord's supper. For years his martyrdom was challenged, saying he had not died for his faith but for mixing himself up in politics. Ultimately the church decided his assassination "was not caused by motives that were simply political, but by hatred for a faith that, imbued with charity, would not be silent in the face of the injustices that relentlessly and cruelly slaughtered the poor and their defenders."

Romero offers a powerful example of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ in a world marked by violence and injustice. Romero combined charity with a passion for justice. He answered the call for holy witnesses who are faithful to the end, who challenge both the Church and the world, and who are willing to speak the truth and pay up personally. He said: "I must tell you, as a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If I am killed, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people." *Today's readings: Jeremiah 11:18–20; Psalm 7:2–3, 9–12; John 7:40–53.*

Tuesday, April 1
Believe

God responds to our petitions, though sometimes in ways and at times we do not expect. Today, we hear about the royal official asking Jesus to heal his ill son. Jesus tells him that his son will live and, though the official believes, it is not until later that he realizes that Jesus' word healed his son. Patient listening and a dedication to prayer are necessary to be attuned to God's movement in our lives. Reflect on how God has responded to your prayers. *Today's readings: Isaiah 65:17–21; Psalm 30:2–6, 11–13; John 4:43–54.*

Wednesday, April 2
Notice

Today we repeat with the psalmist: "The Lord of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob." God is with us just as Jesus is with the sick man in Jerusalem. This evening, reflect on God's presence in your day. Take care to notice the moments, big and small, in which God was with you. Say a

prayer in gratitude and ask for the strength to behold the deeds of the Lord tomorrow. *Today's readings: Ezekiel 47:1–9, 12; Psalm 46:2–9; John 5:1–16.*

Thursday, April 3
Lifted up

In today's reading from the book of Isaiah, we are reminded that "the Lord comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted." We echo this with the psalmist, singing of God's grace and mercy. We are lifted up amid our struggles and strife. In your prayer today, write about something that weighs you down. Offer it up to God, knowing he "lifts up all who are falling / and raises up all who are bowed down." Make it a practice to humbly turn to God when you are feeling weighed down. *Today's readings: Isaiah 49:8–15; Psalm 145: 8–9, 13–14, 17–18; John 5:17–30.*

Friday, April 4
Receive Jesus

Jesus rebukes the religious leaders in today's gospel, saying, "I came in the name of my Father, but you do not accept me." Jesus says they "accept praise from one another" instead of seeking the praise that comes from God. How can you accept Jesus more fully? Consider how you have prioritized the praise or earthly desires of those around you. How can you shift your priorities and seek God in your day-to-day? Challenge yourself to commit to a tangible action that will lead to accepting Jesus. *Today's readings: Exodus 32:7–14; Psalm 106:19–23; John 5:31–47.*

Saturday, April 5
Blinded by wickedness

The reading from the apocryphal book of Wisdom states that the thoughts of the wicked erred, "their wickedness blinded them, and they knew not the hidden counsels of God." Our sinfulness makes it hard to see God and to be guided in holiness. As holy week approaches don't forget a time of confession in your prayers this week. *Today's readings: Wisdom 2:1, 12–22; Psalm 34:17–23; John 7:1–2, 10, 25–30.*