



CELEBRATING AT HOME  
4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT

*The forgiving father (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32)*



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### Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

We stand in your presence, O God;  
**and we praise your holy name.**

May your mercy be upon us, O Lord;  
**as we place our trust in you.**

Show us your mercy and love;  
**and grant us your salvation.**

### Preparing to hear the Word

Faithful God, with your loving and gentle touch, you  
reveal the hidden ways we destroy wholeness of spirit,  
and lead us toward repentance and peace.

**Led by your Word throughout our Lenten journey,  
we return to you with all our heart.**

Like the forgiving father you, Lord,  
wait anxiously to welcome us home.

**Like the prodigal son,  
we acknowledge our sinfulness  
and cast ourselves upon your mercy.**

You do not meet us with vengeance and punishment,  
**but with overwhelming love and forgiveness.**

Holy Spirit come!  
**Heal us with your love,  
that we may come home to you with all our heart.**

### Scripture Reading (*Luke 15:1-3, 11-32*)

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the  
company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the  
Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man,' they  
said, 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he  
spoke this parable to them:

'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father,  
"Father, let me have the share of the estate that  
would come to me." So the father divided the property  
between them. A few days later, the younger son  
got together everything he had and left for a distant  
country where he squandered his money on a life of  
debauchery.

'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a  
severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch,  
so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants  
who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he  
would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the  
pigs were eating but no one offered him anything.  
Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of  
my father's paid servants have more food than they  
want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this  
place and go to my father and say: Father, I have  
sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer  
deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your  
paid servants." So he left the place and went back to  
his father.

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him  
and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped  
him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son  
said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against  
you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But  
the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the  
best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger  
and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been  
fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a  
celebration, because this son of mine was dead and  
has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And  
they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his  
way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear  
music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he  
asked what it was all about, "Your brother has come"  
replied the servant "and your father has killed the  
calf we had fattened because he has got him back  
safe and sound." He was angry then and refused  
to go in, and his father came out to plead with him;  
but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I  
have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your  
orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for  
me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of  
yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your  
property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had  
been fattening."

The father said, "My son, you are with me always and  
all I have is yours. But it was only right we should  
celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was  
dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found."

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### Reflection - *The forgiving father*

This Sunday's Gospel is a parable of lavish and unexpected forgiveness and reconciliation. It is one of three parables in which God's mercy breaks through all human and religious restrictions about how God should act toward sinners.

A wealthy father has two sons. Very cheekily, the younger son asks for his share of the estate which would come to him on his father's death. This is a young man who has places to go and things to see!

Remarkably, the father gives him *half* of his estate, not the *one-third* to which the son was entitled. No wonder the older son is put out. The younger son goes off and has a great time until the money runs out.

Financially ruined he has to earn his keep feeding pigs. He decides to return home, beg forgiveness and ask to be only a servant in his father's household.

The father is anxiously waiting for the son when he returns. He runs to embrace him. The son begins his confession, but the father takes no notice. He does not chastise or lecture. He refuses to treat his son as a servant and immediately sets about restoring him to his rightful place in the household with the ring, the robe and sandals. He orders a feast to celebrate the fact that his son is alive and has returned. No wonder the older son is angry and resentful. But the father sets about reassuring him that his place in the household and in the father's affection is secure and urging him to be reconciled with his brother. We are left wondering about what eventually happened.

The Gospel offers not just the *hope* of God's forgiveness but the *certainty* of it.

The message today is: Rejoice in God's abiding mercy!

*Quiet time for reflection*

### Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

### Closing Prayer

God of compassion,  
you spread a feast to welcome home the lost.  
Save us from the temptations  
that lead away from you,  
and draw us back by the constancy of your love,  
that we may take our place in your household  
and gladly share our inheritance with others  
through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**



# Journey into the Light

This resource is presented by the Carmelites of Australia & Timor-Leste at a time when many cannot gather together as we usually do to celebrate the Eucharist. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family at this time.



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