

1. Read — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.

How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?

[1] Gaudium et Spes, 41

[2] Spiritual Reading in this packet

[3] Pope John Paul II; Dives In Misericordia, 6.3

[4] Saint Gregory the Great; Homily XXXIV in Evangelia

[5] catholic.org

[6] The Liturgical Year; Abbot Gueranger, O.S.B.; Book 10, page 451

[7] Genesis 1:27

[8] 1 Timothy 2:4

[9] English translation of The Order of Mass I

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Quick Connect

What is the Gospel saying? Luke 15:1-32 — Pg. 1

What is the Church saying Past and Present? Pages 1-3

What is God saying to you through this passage? Page 4

Gospel Reading – Luke 15:1-32 – Roman Missal

The tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus, at which the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

[The Lost Sheep]

Then he addressed this parable to them: “Who among you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wasteland and follow the lost one until he finds it? He puts it on his shoulders in jubilation. Once arrived home, he invites friends and neighbors in and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you, there will like wise be more joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to repent.

[The Lost Coin]

“What woman, if she has ten silver pieces and loses one, does not light a lamp and sweep the house in a diligent search until she has retrieved what she lost? And when she finds it, she calls in her friends and neighbors to say, ‘Rejoice with me! I have found the silver piece I lost.’ I tell you, there will be the same kind of joy before the angels of God over one repentant sinner.”

[The Lost Son]

Jesus said to them: “A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that is coming to me.’ So the father divided up the property. Some days later this younger son collected all his belongings and went off to a distant land, where he squandered his money on dissolute living. After he had spent everything, a great famine broke out in that country and he was in dire need. So he attached himself to one of the propertied class of the place, who sent him to his farm to take care of the pigs. He longed to fill his belly with the husks that were fodder for the pigs, but no one made a move to give him anything. Coming to his senses at last, he said: ‘How many hired hands at my father’s place have more than enough to eat, while here I am starving! I will break away and return to my father, and say to him, “Father, I have sinned against God and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son. Treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ With that he set off for his father’s house. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was deeply moved. He ran out to meet him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. The son said to Him, ‘Father, I have sinned against God and against you; I no longer deserve to be called you son.’ The father said to his servants; ‘Quick! Bring out the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Take the fatted calf and kill it. Let

us eat and celebrate because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and is found.’ Then the celebration began. “Meanwhile the elder son was out on the land. As he neared the house on his way home, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked him the reason for the dancing and the music. The servant answered, ‘Your brother is home, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has him back in good health.’ The son grew angry at this and would not go in; but his father came out and began to plead with him. “He said in reply to his father: ‘For years now I have slaved for you. I never disobeyed one of your orders, yet you never gave me so much as a kid goat to celebrate with my friends. Then, when this son of your returns after having gone through your property with loose women, you kill the fatted calf for him.’ “My son,’ replied the father, ‘you are with me always, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice! This brother of yours was dead, and has come back to life. He was lost, and is found.’”

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – 24th Sunday of Ordinary Time

From Life, 4-14, Saint Teresa of Avila

“Even from me some good has been brought forth by Your infinite goodness, and, the great have been my sins, the more has the great blessing of Your mercies shone forth in me. How many reasons have I for singing of them forever! I beseech You, my God, that it may be so: may I sing of them, and that without end, since You have deigned to work such exceeding great mercies in me that they amaze those who behold them, while as for me, I am drawn out of myself continually, that I may be the better able to sing Your praise. For so long as I am in myself, my Lord, and without You, I can do nothing but be cut off like the flowers in this garden, and this miserable earth will become a dunghill again as before. Permit it not, Lord. Let it not be Your will that a soul which You have purchased with so many trials should be lost, when You have so often redeemed it anew and have snatched it from the teeth of the horrible dragon”

The Dignity of Man – Lesson and Discussion

“He was lost and is found”

Jesus compares man to a coin, sheep and a lost son in the three parables. What does this tell us about ourselves? The Church through the Gospel readings and the imagery of a coin, sheep and a lost son is teaching man the “meaning of his own existence, that is, the innermost truth about himself.”[1] In each parable a value is restored. Most central to each person is the dignity they have as a person. The prodigal son squanders his inheritance, which are all material things. These material things are lost and lost forever. What is not lost forever is his dignity, dignity although temporarily lost, can always be restored. The value of man is at the heart of these parables. Saint Theresa of Avila makes an analogy of man comparing him and his choice in life to that of flowers in a garden. Flowers that are cut off from the vine end up decomposing, losing their support, cease to reach for the heavens, cease to grow and fall to the ground unnoticed as they decompose. “For

so long as I am in myself, my Lord, and without You, I can do nothing but be cut off like the flowers in this garden, and this miserable earth will become a dunghill again as before.”[2] Jesus is the vine and we are the branches, if we are cut off from the vine, we are dead and fall to the ground and decompose. If we stay connected to Christ the vine we are supported, raised from the ground and reach toward heaven. “We read the parable of the sheep that was found and then the parable of the coin that was found. Each time there is an emphasis on the same joy that is present in the case of the prodigal son...This joy indicates a good that has remained intact: even if he is a prodigal, a son does not cease to be truly his father’s son; it also indicates a good that has been found again, which in the case of the prodigal son was his return to the truth about himself.”[3] Saint Teresa says that “as long as we are in our self” we can do nothing, what does she mean? How are we “in our self”?

Lost Coin analogy (by Saint Gregory the Great)[4]

The lost coin – the human race

The other nine coins – are the nine choirs of angels, Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels and Angels[5]

The lamp – The light is the Wisdom of God which appeared in human flesh, The Word made Flesh, Jesus Christ the Light of the World. “A lamp is a light which burns in a vessel of clay; and Light in a vessel of clay, is the Divinity in our flesh.”[6] Psalm 22: 16 speaks of Christ on the Cross, “As dry as potsherd [clay] is my throat; my tongue sticks to my palate; you lay me in the dust of death.” Jesus, Light of the World was laid into the dry clay of humanity.

Saint Gregory the Great says that the woman lost her coin when man, who had been created after God’s image, strayed from that image by committing sin. A coin bears the image of the king/leader up on it. This short parable is the story of salvation history. Out of love God created everything and, most precious to Him, was the creation of the angels and humans. Through sin the human race strayed and although created in the image and likeness of God[7], sin caused the image to become blurred and distorted. The loving God, the Creator, the Father desired, like the Good Shepherd, that not even one would be lost, He “wills everyone to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth.”[8] For this reason the Light of the World was put into the clay of humanity (lamp) so that humanity (the lost coin) would be found, held again in the hands of God and once again, the creature would bear the image of the Creator. This mystery is summed up in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, while during the Offertory Prayer, the deacon, or Priest, pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly: “by the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”[9]