



THE STORY OF THE FATHER AND HIS TWO SONS

Jesus told this parable:

“A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, ‘Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.’ So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation.

“When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any.

“Coming to his senses he thought, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.’” So he got up and went back to his father.

“While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.’

“But his father ordered his servants, ‘Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.’

“And they began to celebrate.”

— *Luke 15.11-24*

WELCOME. RECONCILIATION STEP BY STEP.

1) Begin by reading the gospel passage at right. The Story of the Father and His Two Sons is a perfect guide for your celebration of the sacrament. Take time to prepare and pray.

2) The son comes to his senses. He realizes his sin. We “come to our senses” by examining our conscience. These questions will help you examine your conscience:

- Do I take time to pray daily? Does my prayer reflect the needs of the world or just my own needs?
- Do I keep the Lord’s Day holy by attending Mass?
- Do I acknowledge gratitude; do I thank God and the people who bless me in various ways?
- Do I see Jesus in other people? Do I welcome and reach out to new people, or do I stick to my friends, or to myself?
- Do I take care of my physical and emotional needs in a healthy way?
- In what ways do I express concern for the poor, the sick and dying, and the marginalized people of society?
- How do I keep myself informed about the issues of our world so as to be a better Christian and citizen? Do I bring a Christian perspective to current events and voting?
- Do I make sexist or racist or demeaning remarks? Do I have racist or sexist or demeaning attitudes?
- Do I help to address the needs of my parish, my workplace, my school and my community? Do I give the best I can give?
- Do I allow the pursuit of money or things control my life?
- Am I as responsible as I could/should be? Do I procrastinate, do I follow through on my promises and commitments?
- Do I assist those in need by sharing what I have with them?
- Do I concern myself with the conservation of natural resources?
- Do I take time to reflect on the presence and beauty of God in creation?
- Do I try to control my anger? Am I careful about what I say and how I say it?
- Have I abused any of God’s gifts through my actions, such as over-eating, drinking, smoking or using other drugs?
- Do I abide by moral teaching regarding sex outside of marriage? Do I avoid pornography and other temptations that threaten purity?
- Am I truthful and honest? Do my Christian values guide my choices?

PRAYER AFTER CONFESSION



PRAISING GOD

The story of the Father and His Two Sons concludes with a celebration. The son who was dead has come back to life; the son who was gone has returned. Conclude your celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation with this expression of thanksgiving.

Mary's Song of Praise

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, My Spirit rejoices in God my Savior. He has looked with favor on His lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name.

He has mercy on those who fear Him in every generation. He has shown the strength of His arm. He has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of His servant Israel for He has remembered His promise of mercy. The promise He made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children for ever.

Concluding Prayer

Merciful God,
thank you for welcoming me home with your open arms and your gracious embrace of forgiveness.

Encouraged by the grace of this sacrament, may I be renewed in my desire to turn away from sin, to forgive others as you forgive, and to live in the love and light of your Son, Jesus Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever.

Amen.

3) The son determines what he will say when he returns to his father: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you." And returns to his father. Once prepared, enter the reconciliation room; you can sit across from the priest/confessor, or behind a cloth screen.

4) The father welcomes his son. We ritualize that loving ritual in our own sacramental experience of reconciliation:

– The priest/confessor will lead you in making the Sign of the Cross, offer an introductory prayer and possibly share a brief Scripture passage.

– Then you say, "**Father, forgive me. My last confession was _____ ago.**"

– "**Today I seek forgiveness for these sins: _____.**"

– The priest/confessor will initiate a conversation.

– Penance: As a response to God's forgiveness, we are asked to offer a prayer or action as a sign of our gratitude and our desire to change our lives. Choose from one of these options:

• **PRAY:** Take advantage of an opportunity to pray, other than Lord's Day Mass. You could go to a weekday Mass, pray during Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, pray the Stations of the Cross, pray with the Little Black Book, pray the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, or spend time prayerfully reading and reflecting upon the Gospel for this upcoming Sunday.

• **GIVE:** Make an intentional and generous donation to the Catholic Relief Services rice bowl, which is St. Anne's Lenten almsgiving project. If you are from another parish, support their Lenten almsgiving effort, or make a donation to another charity committed to serving the poor.

• **MERCY:** Consider how you are living the Corporal Works of Mercy and how you might make these activities a greater part of your life:

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Visit the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead

– Prayer of Contrition: You will offer a prayer seeking forgiveness and a desire to live a new life. The prayer may be in your own words, or you may offer this prayer:

Merciful God, thank you for welcoming me home with your open arms and your gracious embrace of forgiveness. Encouraged by the grace of this sacrament, may I be renewed in my desire to turn away from sin, to forgive others as you forgive, and to live in the love and light of your Son, Jesus Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

– Absolution and Blessing: The priest/confessor will proclaim the formal prayer of absolution. As he concludes, you will make the Sign of the Cross.

– The priest says, "Go in peace."

You respond, "**Thanks be to God.**"

5) The father rejoices upon his son's return. Upon leaving the reconciliation room, we conclude by praying Mary's Song of Praise found in the left-hand column of this page.