“He said to him, ‘My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’”

- Lk 15:31-32

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

PART ONE: THE FATHER

This weekend, we hear the well-known and moving parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 1-32) and I would like to spend the next few weeks reflecting on this parable as we get closer to Holy Week and to Easter, particularly because we are in the Year of Mercy. The reflections have been greatly inspired by the Rembrandt painting of this parable that we have in our church during this special year and also a book by Henri Nouwen called “The Return of the Prodigal Son” that is a meditation on the parable and the painting. Why so much focus on the parable and on the painting? Well, we are doing this because this parable is the parable or Gospel passage that captures how we can understand what God’s love and mercy really means. That is also why we have the Rembrandt painting in our church during the Year of Mercy as a powerful reminder of that presence of God’s mercy and our call to imitate this mercy in our lives.

We know that Rembrandt painted the picture in 1669 (just a short time before his death). He was greatly moved by the parable and began to make some sketches for it some 30 plus years earlier in 1636; but it took him all that time to compose and then paint the right painting. Many think of it as his greatest painting and indeed as one of the greatest paintings ever produced by any artist. Incidentally, the painting is very large (more-or-less life-size at 8 feet and 7 inches by 7 feet and 3 inches) and it hangs in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. Rembrandt wants us to look at each of the three main characters in the parable story and then to gain insight from the painting into the deeper meaning of Jesus’ parable. So, let us do that together.

The beautiful and moving parable of the prodigal son is, for many of us, the best known and best loved of all the many parables that Jesus uses. We know that Jesus often used parables as a way of teaching his disciples, including us, of course. Familiar events or everyday things are used as a vehicle or medium to teach about deep and spiritual things and so lead us to a deeper relationship with God. This is certainly the case with our parable today and our painting. Perhaps Jesus based the parable upon a real life event in a local village involving a father’s son, who went off, encountered disaster and then returned home in shame. In the same way, Rembrandt paints three real characters who look real and everyday (for example, their clothing) and who show real and everyday traits and emotions: things that we can readily identify with.

Let us look at this week at the father and then over the next two weeks we will look at the two sons.

We call the parable “the parable of the prodigal son”, but we might also call it the parable of the “prodigal” (that is prodigious or even wasteful) father! How so? Well, in a way, the father is also prodigal or wasteful in the sense of his amazing and superabundant love and mercy. First of all, he must have known the character of his younger son and what he would probably do with his inheritance and yet he gives his son what he wants: his freedom to go off and do what he wants. The father did not seem to take offence that the son wanted his inheritance right now, even before his father died. This request of the younger son would have been deeply shocking to the audience who first heard Jesus give this parable and indeed it would be shocking to anyone in the Middle East today. Why? Because the son’s request was as good as saying that the son wished his father dead right now. He even used his inheritance, a gift from his father, to journey away from him. And yet, after all this, the father welcomed the son back even though he had wasted all that hard-earned fortune.

The father then restored his younger son’s status, symbolized in putting a ring on his finger and giving him a new cloak. The father did not even wait to hear his son’s rehearsed apology: he ran to greet him and welcomed him home with no recriminations or speeches. Yes, again and again, the father was indeed prodigal or wasteful in love.

All this is expressed in Rembrandt’s painting. The warmth and light of the father’s love and mercy is seen in the warm hues of his red cloak and in the light that seems to bathe the father like an aura around him. This same warmth and light also seem to envelop the younger son: how true that love and mercy do this! Notice the kindness and compassion shown in the face of the father and how he stoops down to embrace his son: he does not stand upright, aloof or stiffly on ceremony. The father’s face also shows the pain that he must have suffered in “losing” his son. The younger son may have almost wished his father dead as we have seen, but the greater pain for the father was in thinking that his son might have died. Finally, notice how large the father’s hands are: the hands look stiffened with arthritis and yet they are big enough to welcome back his son. In fact, the light in the painting is really centered on those big and powerful hands: they are the symbol and sign of love and mercy.

The father in the parable is, of course, an image of God and of His amazing, generous, even prodigal love. He is indeed “the Father of mercies” to quote the Prayer of Absolution in the Sacrament of Confession. We can think of all His gifts and love that are scattered everywhere, even to giving us His only Son. He gives these gifts even when they are ignored or rejected, or when the receivers of these gifts are prodigal or wasteful with them, or even use them to journey away from Him. We should remember that the context of Jesus’ parable is that the so-called “good” people are complaining because Jesus welcomes sinners and even eats with them! Our Gospel then helps us to recall and to celebrate the love and compassion of God: as the Father who is, we might say, prodigal in that love and mercy.

Fr. Anthony
STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Please join us for the Stations of the Cross each Friday at 7 PM in the Church. This week the stations will be led by the Life Teen Core Team.

Easter Flowers and the St. Vincent de Paul Society

The St. Vincent de Paul Society will be purchasing flowers to decorate the altar for Easter. If you wish to help with this endeavor, your donation, in memory of a loved one or in your family’s name, will be used to purchase Easter plants. Surplus donations will be used to continue the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in assisting the underprivileged of our parish family. More information can be found on the lavender sheets found at the entrances of church. Thank you for your continued support.

PREPARING FOR EASTER

Families, adults & teens of the parish are all invited to join the ladies of the Altar Rosary Society as we wash & shine the church. Let’s all bring some rags, buckets, favorite cleaning products, wood polish and a smile. Remember, “many hands make light work.” We will gather Tuesday, March 8th at 6:30 pm in the church. We’ll work no later than 8 pm. Then we will pray the rosary for all of the intentions of the parish. We hope you’ll join us!

Easter Flowers and the St. Vincent de Paul Society

The St. Vincent de Paul Society will be purchasing flowers to decorate the altar for Easter. If you wish to help with this endeavor, your donation, in memory of a loved one or in your family’s name, will be used to purchase Easter plants. Surplus donations will be used to continue the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in assisting the underprivileged of our parish family. More information can be found on the lavender sheets found at the entrances of church. Thank you for your continued support.

GIFT CERTIFICATES FOR EASTER FOOD BAGS

The St. Ambrose Food Pantry Volunteers will again offer Easter dinner supplies for families in need. Market Bags will be available starting weekend of March 5th & 6th. In addition to the food list attached to the Easter bags, gift certificates from Hannaford or Price Chopper in $5, $10 or $15 amounts would be most appreciated. These will be distributed according to family size for purchase of a meat choice. Please DO NOT PLACE GIFT CERTIFICATES IN THE BAGS. Please place in an envelope or drop off no later than March 15th at the office or in offertory collection marked St. Ambrose Food Pantry or Easter Dinner. The number of families requesting assistance have increased a great deal; together we can help these families experience a most BLESSED EASTER.

Martha Ministry

With Easter coming soon, Martha Ministry is in need of volunteers to help with the Holy Thursday Dessert Sharing, Good Friday Soup Supper and Holy Saturday RCIA Reception.

We will also need help with First Holy Communion on Saturday, May 7 at 9 AM and the Confirmation on Sunday, May 22nd after 5:30 PM Mass. If you would like to help us, please come to our meeting on Monday, March 7th at 7 PM in Meeting Room #1. If you can’t make the meeting or if you have any questions please call Donna Sabatino at 782-1470. Please call Rose Ann Szewdo at 469-5367 to help with the Soup Supper.

Spring Forward

Don’t forget to set your clock ahead 1 hour Saturday Night March 12th.

PANTRY VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Can you volunteer a 4 hour period one day a month? Volunteers are needed to fill requests for food. If interested, please call Pauline 785-1351.
**Lent 2016**

**Are you an adult who has not made the Sacrament of Confirmation?**

**We can help you today!**

Contact
“faithformationAA@stambroselatham.com”
and we’d be happy to help!

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**Sacrament of Mercy**

Speaker: Fr. Anthony Barratt

**Wednesday, March 9th at 7 PM in the Parish Center**

Jesus left us the Sacrament of Reconciliation to bring to our brokenness. Fr. Barratt will guide us through how we celebrate and receive His great gift in the Sacrament.

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**The Light is On For You!**

**Parish Reconciliation Service**

**Tuesday, March 15th**

7pm to 8:30pm

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**3:16 Songs to the Beloved**

**Night of Praise**

On March 16th, come celebrate the love of the Father and the great gift of His mercy. Join us at 7 PM in the Church.

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**WE NOW OFFER E-GIVING**

**An Alternative Way of Making Your Contribution**

- Accessible by Smart Phone and Computer
- Industry-Standard Security
- Check, Debit, or Credit Card
- Set up for a one-time or weekly contribution

Visit www.stambroselatham.com
| **SATURDAY:**  
(19th March) | **Sacrament of Reconciliation 3:00—4:10 pm**  
Mass at the usual time with blessing of the palms at Mass. |
| **PALM SUNDAY:** | Masses at the usual times with the blessing of the palms at each Mass.  
Note: the 9:00 am Mass will begin in the Parish Center with the blessing of palms followed by a procession to the church for Mass. |
| **MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK:** | Communion Service 6:30 am |
| **TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK:** | Mass at 9:00 am (school Mass) |
| **WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK:** | Mass at 6:30 am |
| **HOLY THURSDAY:** | (Note: **NO** morning Mass)  
**Sacrament of Reconciliation 9:00—9:45 am**  
**Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper 7:00 pm**  
8:00 pm Dessert sharing in Parish Center  
Followed by watching until 10:30 pm (ending with Night Prayer) |
| **GOOD FRIDAY:** | **Solemn Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion 3:00 pm**  
Soup Supper – 4:00 pm – Parish Center  
**Sacrament of Reconciliation 5:30—6:30 pm**  
“Living” Stations of the Cross – 7:00 pm |
| **HOLY SATURDAY:** | (Note: **NO** Morning Mass)  
**Sacrament of Reconciliation 9:00—9:45 am**  
Easter Egg Hunt – 1:00 pm  
**Easter Vigil Mass – 7:30 pm**  
Reception following Mass in Parish Center |
| **EASTER SUNDAY:** | Masses:  
7:30 am  
9:00 am  
11:30 am  
(Note: **NO** 5:30 pm Mass) |
What a wonderful surprise visit I had this week from some of our beloved Little Sisters of the Poor. They so wonderfully served our elderly at Our Lady of Hope. They send their love and prayers and want our community to know they are always remembered, and never forgotten. They are currently ministering in Enfield, Connecticut.

Easter Baskets for children
Candy baskets for children. Please bring them to my office by March 16th so they can be delivered. This project is also being assisted by Intern, Lena Sposito.

Easter Baskets for the Elderly
We will be collecting baskets of candy, as well as flowers, lotions and powders for the Elderly. Please return by March 25 to my office.
For further questions please call me at 785-1351 Ext. 304
MISSION STATEMENT

We, the members of St. Ambrose Parish, Latham, New York believe that, through our faith and baptism, we have been called to give witness to the values of Jesus as expressed in the gospel and teachings of our Church. As individuals and as a Parish Family we strive to:

Develop our spiritual life, Spread the Gospel message,  
Respect the human dignity and rights of all persons  
Support family life: the role of married couples, singles, youth and children  
Share our time, energy, talent and resources

Strengthened by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to make choices and decisions that will reflect and give evidence of what we say we believe and value as a Catholic Christian Faith Community.

Sacraments

RECONCILIATION  
Saturday, 3:00 PM or any time by appointment.

MARRIAGE  
Congratulations! So that proper preparation may be made, please make an appointment with Fr. Anthony at least six months before the desired date. Either the bride or groom should be a registered parishioner of St. Ambrose parish.

BAPTISM  
Congratulations! If you wish to arrange preparation for baptism, please call the Parish Office. Parents should be registered members of St. Ambrose parish.

RCIA  
(Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults)  
For those inquiring about the Catholic Faith. Welcome!  
Please contact the Parish Office for program details.

VOCATION  
If you are considering a vocation to the priesthood, diaconate or religious life, please contact Fr. Anthony.

PARISHIONER REGISTRATION/UPDATE REQUEST

Name: __________________________________________
Street: _________________________________________
City: ___________________________________________
Zip: ____________________________________________
Phone No: ______________________________________

Please Check

☐ New Registration
☐ Change of Address
☐ Moving out of Parish
☐ Want Envelopes
☐ Name Change (Please contact Parish Secretary)

Please cut out and drop it in the Collection Basket or mail to the Parish Office.

THE EVANGELIST SUBSCRIPTION

Name: __________________________________________
Address: _________________________________________
City: ___________________________ State: _________
Zip: ____________________________
Phone No: _______________________

Please check:

☐ Continue my subscription to the Evangelist, here is my $18.00/yr.
☐ Add my name to the subscription list, here is my $18.00/yr.

Please cut out, make check payable to St. Ambrose Church, drop it in the Collection Box or mail to the Parish Office.

Are you struggling with your emotions, a loss, an addiction, a relationship or family issues?  
COUNSELING is available in the evenings at St. Ambrose.

A $25 donation is appreciated.  
Contact Dave Dobkowski, Ph.D. at 859-4015 to make an appointment.

PARISHES OF OUR LOCAL CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES

COLONIE
St. Clare’s 456-3112 Sat: 4:00pm/Sun: 8:30 / 10:30am

LATHAM  
Our Lady of the Assumption 785-0234 Sat: 4:30pm  
Sun: 7:30am,  
9:00am St. Joseph Prov. House 10:30am

LOUDONVILLE
Christ Our Light 459-6635 Sat: 4:00pm/Sun: 9:00 / 11:15am  
St. Pius X 462-1336 Sat: 5pm/Sun: 8, 10 & 12 noon
"We Are A Tithing Parish Following “God’s Plan for Giving”

February 28, 2016 $19,867.03
March 1, 2015 $22,985.57

Renewed thanks for your generosity and many thanks to everyone for the generous response to the Increased Offertory Campaign.

Save the Date

For
2016 Autumn Gathering

Date: Saturday, October 22, 2016
Place: LaSalle Institute, Troy
Time: 9:00 AM — 3:00 PM

More Details Will Follow!!!
Office of Lay Ministry Formation

A Family Perspective
by Bud Ozar

We may feel like the Prodigal Son but the gospel wants us to focus on the father who was forgiving and understanding. We all make mistakes and need forgiveness. Who in your family needs your forgiveness and acceptance this Lent?

ALBANY NY CHAPTER OF MAGNIFICAT
(a Ministry to Catholic Women) is hosting a Women’s Breakfast on Saturday, March 12 from 9 AM – 12 PM at the Holiday Inn Express Latham, 400 Old Loudon Rd., Latham, NY. Tickets: $20.00; Clergy & Religious - Free. Guest Speaker is Amy Richardson. Register by March 4 - send your $20 check payable to Albany NY Chapter of Magnificat, PO Box 340, Clifton Park, NY, 12065. Please include your name, address and phone # and email address. Questions, call Heather @ 877-8358 or register at magnificat-ministry.net/chapters-websites/albany-ny/. ALL WOMEN ARE INVITED!

UPCOMING PROGRAM FROM THE CONSULTATION CENTER
A perfect way to end your Lenten & Easter Journey!
Offered by Marni Gillard, MA
Thursdays, March 31, April 7, 14 & 21 from 7—9 pm
Pastoral Center, 40 N Main, Albany
$50 (payment after 3/24 will be $55)
Call 489-4431 for more info.
**Consultation Center of Diocese of Albany**

**Dreamwork and the Inner Life**

Ongoing dream group facilitated by Deacon Charles Hall, MA

**Anger Management**

Individual sessions available ♦ $25 per session

*For more information or to register call the Consultation Center at 518-489-4431.*

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**FOOD PANTRY STATS**

The Food Pantry served 65 households in February. This included 146 adults and 125 children. As always the generosity of St. Ambrose parishioners is deeply appreciated and helpful. The ongoing need is great and all food and monetary contributions are much appreciated as we strive to feed the hungry in our community.

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**BISHOP MAGINN HIGH SCHOOL**

Spring Open House

Thursday, March 10, 5—7 pm

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**LITURGICAL ROLES FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 13, 2016**

### Money Counters, Sunday, March 13th

**Team #6—Steve Green, Richard Ostiguy & Tom Dame**

**Money Counters, Monday, March 14th**

**Team #2—Jan, Mike & Pat Rayball**

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Our meeting on February 11th went well. We had a new member join the club and a couple of new ones promised for next month. Please check us out—our Trip Coordinator would so much like to be able to plan a day trip.

Our speaker on Black History was our secretary, Jannie Dages. She had relatives that had a lot to do with the development of Troy. Prospect Park was one of the designs he did and the Erie Canal was another.

About 20 of us went to lunch at the “Hill Top Café” and all enjoyed our food. The next meeting is March 10 at 10 AM. Thank you, President Carolyn Chabot...785-6315.