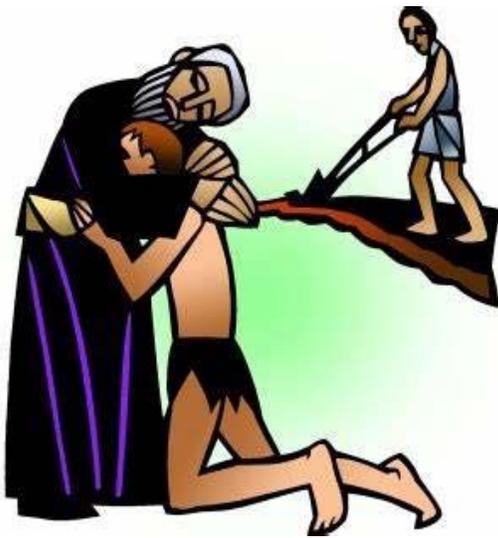


**For The Bulletin of
March 31, 2019**



THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (LAETARE)

From Father Robert

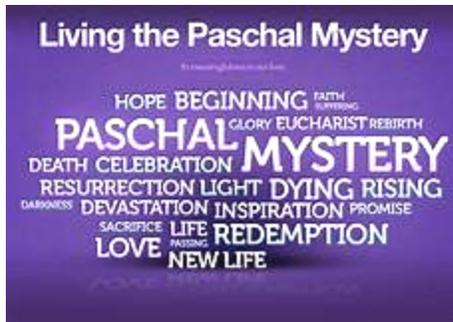
We often hear today's gospel referred to as the Story of the Prodigal Son. But this might be a bit of a misnomer. Even the New American Bible has a different title for this story, calling it the Story of the "Lost Son." The term "prodigal" means "wastefully extravagant," as in "my vacation spending this summer was especially prodigal, as I was having a good time after working so hard during the previous year." The word has a different meaning from "prodigy," which means "one endowed with exceptional abilities," although sometimes preachers/homilists conflate the meaning of the two terms. So when we refer to the Prodigal Son it might be worth the time to clarify what we actually mean by the term prodigal.

But ultimately the story is not so much about the lost or prodigal son. It's not even so much about his brother, though

we could call it the story of the two sons. In reality, the story is about the loving father, how the father is a personification of God, and the kind of love God has for us. The story is sometimes interpreted so that the sons represent Gentile (lost) and Jewish (favored) identities. In this, the Gentiles have lost their way and lived generally wanton lives of decadence, whereas Jews have followed the wishes of God. But in the end, both sons, Gentile and Jew, receive the same reward.

In today's telling, the story is often interpreted more literally, or at least personally, as referring to a wayward person who has ultimately been redeemed. The story is particularly meaningful to many who have lived lives of regret or shame, only to feel the loving embrace of God, a community of hope, a family, or even church upon turning away from their wayward lifestyle.

One of the advantages of a story like this is that it has so many possible interpretations. And this story is told only by Luke. Without him we would know nothing of the Prodigal Son, and certainly nothing of the many works of art inspired by the parable, such as Rembrandt's "Return of the Prodigal Son." There is no sole or singular point to this story. The parable is multi-layered and ought to make us reflect on it, as the church and our spiritual ancestors have done for centuries.



Redemption and forgiveness are powerful themes, and they are articulated in today's gospel in a particularly dramatic way. These themes are also favorites of Luke, who uses the term "forgiveness of sins" more than any other New Testament author. The apostle Paul, for example, never says the word "forgiveness." (And perhaps he should have as it's a much easier concept to grasp than "justification!") Luke is a master storyteller, he crafts a brief but memorable narrative here. The characters are stock: we probably know people like the sons in today's gospel. Do we know people like the father? Would we react like the father? Do we react like the father? Though we might or might not have lost wayward children, there are many opportunities to express mercy and loving kindness, and share reconciliation and forgiveness with another. When we behave in this way we are acting like the father, acting in a way that God acts. Perhaps this is why Pope Francis chose the theme "mercy" for his pontificate. As we learn in today's gospel, mercy is a fundamental expression of God and God's character. Mercy is not merely for God alone: mercy is worthy of emulation.

- The psalmist tells us, "Look to God that you may be radiant with joy, and your faces may not blush with shame." Where do you feel shame or guilt over past

transgressions? How might you give these emotions to the Lord?

- St. Paul tells us we are entrusted with the "message of reconciliation." How do you carry out the ministry of reconciliation with your family? With your friends? With co-workers? Neighbors?
- Which figure in the parable of the Prodigal Son do you identify with the most at this point in your faith journey: the prodigal son, the older son, or forgiving father? Why?
- At this halfway point in our Lenten journey, how have you been living the spiritual practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving? Is there anything you would like to do differently for the second half of Lent?



About Liturgy: Examination of Conscience

Today's familiar gospel reading of the Prodigal Son – though many would rightly rename it the "Merciful Father" for his abundant compassion – gives us an opportunity to look at how we examine our conscience. Many of us will recall from our childhood our preparations for making a good confession by going through some kind of list of questions that helped us see where we had failed to live up to our baptism. Such lists can be very useful when preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In fact, the church gives

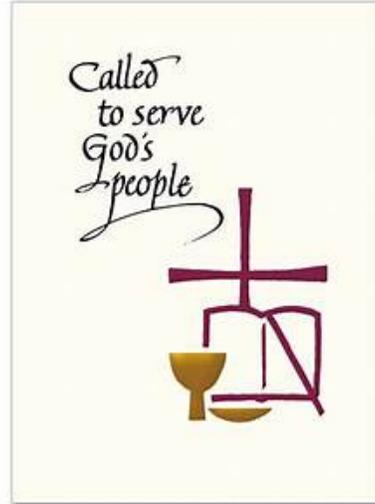
us several examples of an examination of conscience, which you can find in Appendix III of the Rite of Penance. The purpose of these is to help us examine our life in light of God's Word.

However, the church also invites us to do a daily examination of conscience. We see this embedded in the Liturgy of Compline, or Night Prayer, which is part of the Liturgy of the Hours. It is the final liturgy before sleeping that we pray either individually or in community.

At the beginning of Night Prayer we are invited to spend some moments examining our conscience. Some use the Ignatian disciple of the *examen*. A simple structure for this has five steps: 1) recall God's presence; 2) look back on the day and give thanks; 3) pay attention to your feelings, whether positive or negative; 4) reflect more deeply on one part of your day that God may be calling you to examine more closely; and 5) give thanks again to God in hope for more opportunities to encounter Christ in our daily lives.

Finally, every celebration of Holy Eucharist invites us into an examination of conscience. At the beginning of the Penitential Rite the presider calls us to acknowledge our sin in order to prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. Then follows a brief silence during which we are to examine our heart.

When we practice a daily, weekly, and sacramental examination of our lives, we will be participating in Christ's ministry of reconciliation and will be ambassadors of His constant mercy.



The Members and Pastoral Council of Saint Andrew's Lutheran Church cordially invite you to attend the Service of Ordination for **The Reverend Herman A. Sealey** as a Pastor of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) on Sunday, April 14, 2019, at 4:00 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church, 195 Alvarado Avenue, Pittsburg, California 94565.

Our parish has had a wonderful relationship with St. Andrew's Lutheran Church for the past 15 years. Their Pastor, Rev. Roger Kuehn, has participated in our Ecumenical Good Friday Liturgies as well as we participating in the World Hunger Walk which always leaves from their facility on San Jose Avenue. I am attending and I hope there will be other parishioners who will join me in this wonderful event on Palm Sunday for Deacon Sealey as he is ordained to the Presbyterate.



Today is your opportunity to participate in this year's annual Bishop's Appeal. Over the last two weeks, we have reflected on how we can make a difference in supporting both parishes and schools in need in our diocese. Our goal for this year is the same as for last: **\$34,900**. Last year, we exceeded the goal by 104.51%! I believe we can do the same this year and what is important is that everyone participates. I realize that some will contribute a one time gift of \$70, others will give more, others will contribute less, but again, what is crucial is that everyone participate. Appeal envelopes are once again in the pews as well as on the credenza. Please place your Appeal Envelope with your contribution in the first collection at each liturgy today. Many thanks for what you are doing to help us reach this year's goal.



The Delta Deanery will be offering the Sacrament of Penance in each of the eight parishes in communal celebrations on the following dates:

Wednesday, April 3rd: St. Anthony, Oakley; 7:00 p.m.

THIS Thursday, April 4th: St. Ignatius of Antioch, Antioch; 7:30 p.m.

St. Anne Parish, Byron; 7:00 p.m.

Monday, April 8th: Church of the Good Shepherd, Pittsburg; 7:00 p.m.



If you have not registered in our parish and have been attending regularly, I invite you to join us officially by registering. It is a simple process of either coming to the parish office in person or even registering over the phone. To register means you are making the commitment to be a member of our parish community, to become involved in ministry as a disciple of Jesus, and to support the parish financially through your tithes and offerings. Over the past weeks we have encountered a number of people who thought that just because they worship with us on the weekend that that made them automatically members – that is not the case. To register is to make a commitment, to take responsibility for your share in supporting the ministry of the parish, to have ownership, to belong. If you have questions about what it means to be a registered member, please do not hesitate to reach out to either me or our secretary, Maryann Peddicord, and we will be happy to speak with you.



The Easter Environment

You are invited to become a part of one of the great traditions of our parish by contributing to the Easter Environment. Our Art & Environment Committee has once again planned a beautiful and appropriate environment that says “EASTER!” for the entire 7 weeks of the Easter Season. Your contributions provide the candles, fabric, art work, vestments, floral arrangements, plants, and trees that adorn the sanctuary from the evening of The Great Vigil to Pentecost. Your donation may be made either “In memory of” or “In honor of” a loved one. Please place your contribution in the envelopes provided and indicate the nature of your donation, either “in honor of” or “in loving memory of.” Many thanks for your support.



Saturday Morning, April 13th, 9:00 a.m., Join us to help cut, wash, dry, and bundle the more than 2,000 palm fronds that will be prepared for our Palm Sunday Liturgies.

Saturday, April 13th, 4:00 p.m.
The Vigil Eucharist of Palm Sunday

The Blessing of the Palms, Procession, Reading of the Passion, Holy Eucharist

Sunday, April 14th, 8 and 11:00 a.m.
PLEASE NOTE THE TIME CHANGE OF THE LITURGIES!

The Blessing of the Palms, Procession, Reading of the Passion, Holy Eucharist

Monday, April 15th, 8:00 a.m.
Holy Eucharist for Monday of Holy Week

Tuesday, April 16th, 8:00 a.m.
Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion for Tuesday of Holy Week

Wednesday, April 17th, 8:00 a.m.
Holy Eucharist for Wednesday of Holy Week

Triduum



Holy Thursday, April 18th, 8:00 a.m. Sung Morning Prayer

7:30 p.m. The Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper – *Reception of the Newly Blessed Holy Oils, Liturgy of the Word, Washing of Feet, Holy Eucharist, Candle-light Procession to the Altar of Repose; Incense*

Good Friday, April 19th 8:00 a.m. Sung Morning Prayer

12:00 Noon
Ecumenical Good Friday Service
“The Seven Last Words”

3:00 p.m. Solemn Commemoration of the Lord's Passion and Death –
Liturgy of the Word, Veneration of the Cross, Holy Communion

7:30 p.m. Sung Evening Prayer and Veneration of the Cross (*Incense*)

Holy Saturday, April 20th

8:00 a.m. Sung Morning Prayer

8:00 p.m. The Great Vigil – *Lighting of the New Fire, Liturgy of the Word, The Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist), Renewal of Baptismal Promises, Holy Eucharist*



Sunday, April 21st, 8:00 a.m.
Procession, Liturgy of the Word, Renewal of Baptismal Promises, Holy Eucharist

11:00 a.m. PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF TIME!
Procession, Liturgy of the Word, Renewal of Baptismal Promises, Holy Eucharist; Incense



Liturgical Ministers Evening of Reflection

All those in Liturgical Ministry are invited to join us for an Evening of Reflection this coming Tuesday evening, April 2nd, at 7:00 p.m. If you are a Eucharistic Minister, Lector, Altar Server, Adult Acolyte, Sacristan, Choir Member, Cantor, Funeral Coordinator, member of the Liturgy Committee, this evening is for you! We will be reflecting on Holy Week, Palm Sunday, the Triduum, and Easter.



Our parish is extremely blessed by all the volunteers who do so much to help us each week: to all those who arrive very early each Saturday morning to clean the church and parish hall: **Al Cosce, Jun Bajet, Reno Benasfre, Thelma Benasfre, Angela Bueno, Jean Rogers, Nina Bourdain, Mencey Osborne, Carole Miller, and Emilia Freking;** to those who clean and maintain the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall throughout the week: **Rose Salamanca, Steve Rojek,**

Mary Ewing, Patricia Britton, and Father Robert.

...to **Dilcia Aparicio** who does such an excellent job of washing, ironing, and caring for the Sacred Linens.

...to our Sacristans and Altar Guild who prepare the sanctuary for the celebration of Eucharist each week:

Peter Degl'Innocenti, Pam and Rich Confetti, Vincent Rodriguez, Harlan Young, Monika Kauer, Cynthia Enrique, Nancy Santos and Rose Salamanca.

...to **our counting teams** who are here every week to count the weekly collections.

...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week:

Frances Rojek, Mel Costanza, Maryann Peddicord, Rowena Cayaban, Estrella Rusk, Alicia Perez, Joe Fanfa, Bev Iacona and Paul Riofski.

...to our St. Vincent de Paul and Mobile Mall volunteers who transported last week's donations: **Frank Zamora and Barbara Jackson.**

...to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: **Dave Costanza (Lead), Carole Miller, Beth Enea, Richard Enea, Kathy Augusta, Vince Augusta and Sherry Webb.**

...to our wonderful Parking Lot Security who keeps watch over our vehicles during the weekend Liturgies: **Don Benson, Steve Rojek and Dave Simpson.**



Last Saturday evening, members of our parish joined me for a Vigil to honor our sisters and brothers killed in the massacre in ChristChurch, New Zealand. It was held at the East Bay Islamic Center here in Antioch. I am deeply grateful to **Estrella Rusk, Brian and Vicki McCoy, Rick and Sue Howell, and Steve and Frances Rojek** who joined me in expressing our condolences and sympathy to our Islamic Community. The following message was received from Dr. Mohammed Chaudhry this past Monday:

Dear Fr. Rien and Members of St. Ignatius of Antioch Catholic Community,

Please accept our deepest gratitude for finding time and standing with us and saying words of love and solidarity. Indeed, nothing on earth could be more rewarding and consoling than the deepest love and the kindest words you said yesterday. The Muslim Community shall always remember this unique and so powerful practical expression of solidarity and love for us all. God bless you! We are just so proud of you!

Best regards,
Dr. Mohammed Chaudhry, The Islamic Center of the East Bay