



TRUST

LENTEN PROGRAM 2019

CONTENTS

4 **Leading the weekly sessions**

5 **Contributor biographies**

Sunday reflections

Fr Sean Cullen

Sr Hilda Scott OSB

Mgr Graham Schmitzer

6 **Contributor biographies**

Weekday reflections

Kate Atkins MGL

Mr Ken Bryant

Fr Mike Delaney

Fr Leo Duck

Sr Susanna Edmunds OP

Mr Peter Gilmore

Fr Richard Green OSPPE

Fr Antony Jukes OFM

Sr Magdalen Mather OSB

Miss Trish McCarthy

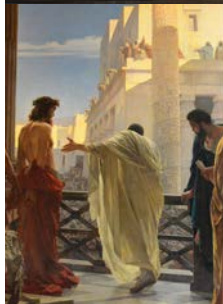
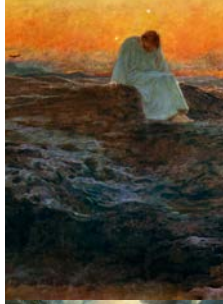
Mr Matthew Ockinga

Sr Anastasia Reeves OP

Fr Christopher G Sarkis

Miss Michelle Vass

9 **Cover artwork reflection**



12

THE TEMPTATION

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

22

THE TRANSFIGURATION

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

32

THE BURNING BUSH

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

42

THE PRODIGAL SON

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

53

THE CONDEMNATION

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

62

THE PASSION

PALM SUNDAY

6 MARCH 2019

Ash Wednesday

JOEL 2:12–18
PSALM 50(51):3–6, 12–14, 17
2 CORINTHIANS 5:20–6:2
MATTHEW 6:1–6, 16–18

**Now is the favourable time;
this is the day of salvation.** 2 CORINTHIANS 6:2

“Oh dear, is it Ash Wednesday already? Where did that year go? Oh well, here we go again, better get into it I suppose. What time is Mass today? Oh yes, no meat either, and I must think about what I’ll give up too and try to do better than last year—that’s another story! What does the Gospel today say again? Fasting, repentance, self-denial, almsgiving ... hmm.”

Does this sound familiar? Be honest. That’s ok. You’re in good company. But, just for the sake of it, how about an alternative this year.

Note to self: “Ash Wednesday today. Great! I’ve been waiting for this. I really need it this year. Time to consciously and deliberately stop and take stock of myself, my life, my relationship with God. Lord, enable me to trust that you will help me to do this, and to open myself to you and your grace. Thank you for today, this ash which reminds me to refocus my life on you alone and on whom I depend totally. Thank you for these 40 days of Lent: these 40 opportunities through prayer, fasting, repentance, self-denial and almsgiving to grow closer to you, Jesus—to experience the Father’s infinite mercy, healing and love. Holy Spirit, enter the secret room of my heart and soul and reinvigorate me with your grace that I may turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

“Oh yes, and Mary, my Mother, walk with me during these life-giving days as you did with the first disciples, encouraging them and leading them to Jesus, your Son: ‘Do whatever he tells you’” (John 2:5).

Lord Jesus, help me to trust you that I may always turn to you today, during Lent, and always. Amen.

FR CHRISTOPHER G SARKIS

9 MARCH 2019

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

ISAIAH 58:9–14
PSALM 85(86):1–6
LUKE 5:27–32

Call the Sabbath “Delightful”. ISAIAH 58:13

We are four days into Lent, and perhaps we are already wavering in our resolve to “turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel”. Like St Paul, we do the things we don’t want to do, and fail to do the things we want to do (cf. Romans 7:15). God made us and knows us even better than we know ourselves. So, let’s take our lead from his Word.

Tomorrow is Sunday—the Lord’s day, the Christian Sabbath. How can we make this day “delightful”? For the Jewish people, the Sabbath was the seventh day. From earliest times, Christians have kept Sunday as the Lord’s day, an eighth day, or rather, an altogether new first day—reminding us of God’s creative power at the beginning of time. So, Sunday is a day to be *re-created*, to be renewed in Christ. And, we know in the depths of our being that we need it.

As you prepare for Sunday, why not plan, or unplan your day so that it is truly delightful, truly renewing? Go to a later Mass with your family, and then perhaps enjoy a leisurely breakfast just being together. Make time for quiet prayer. Go for a walk with your spouse/son/daughter—whoever you’ve been meaning to give some extra attention. Ignore emails, avoid the shops, and enjoy the deep rest and peace the Lord wants to give you. Then, on Monday, begin again your Lenten commitments with God’s renewing power.

Lord God, thank you for the gift of a day of rest; help me to welcome this gift each week so that I can begin again with you and the ones I love. Amen.

SR ANASTASIA REEVES OP

19 MARCH 2019

Saint Joseph

2 SAMUEL 7:4–5, 12–14, 16
PSALM 88(89):2–5, 27, 29
ROMANS 4:13, 16–18, 22
ALT: LUKE 2:41–51A

Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs? LUKE 2:49

"But, I'm your father." That's probably what Joseph would have said to 12-year-old Jesus. Mary had implored Jesus, "See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you," and to that, Jesus gives them an answer that they do not understand. But I'm your father. I cared for you. I raised you. I've done everything I was asked to do! I love you!

We don't know a lot about St Joseph. He appears in the Scriptures only briefly, and then is gone again. Over the centuries, large tracts of private revelation and meditations have appeared about the life of Jesus' foster father. They attempt to fill in the gaps missing in this grand narrative, but perhaps we shouldn't be so hasty to do so.

The life of the almost anonymous Joseph is a vision for us of stewardship and trust. He was given something, or someone in this case, of supreme value to care for, and his life was turned upside down in the process. He didn't know all the details. He didn't have a plan. He was just told to do his part and to trust. In our results driven world, we are so quick to look to the end of any journey—will it be worth it? But most, if not all, of what we do for God is plant the seeds for a harvest that will never be ours to reap. The true test of our stewardship isn't the success, but our faithfulness. St Joseph didn't know he was caring for God himself, he was just being the best father he could be.

Lord Jesus, help us to be faithful to your calling today. Amen.

MR PETER GILMORE

22 MARCH 2019

Friday of the 2nd week of Lent

GENESIS 37:3–4, 12–13, 17–28
PSALM 104(105):16–21
MATTHEW 21:33–43, 45–46

When they heard his parables, the chief priests and the scribes realised he was speaking about them. MATTHEW 21:45

There is a powerful action of the Holy Spirit taking place here—it is the action of the heart being convicted. Conviction is a unique task of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14) with the purpose of helping us see our sin through God's covenantal relationship with us: Those areas of our hearts that are not yet fully converted or transformed into the pattern of God's own heart *and* to strengthen or fortify beliefs grounded in truth, from which we can decide and act with confidence.

Throughout Lent, the atmosphere is charged with the action of the Holy Spirit. And, in God's goodness, grace (the help we need) is made abundant. If we allow the Holy Spirit to convict us, we can trust that grace will hold us. You may wish to express this trust now:

*Holy Spirit, you are welcome here.
I give you permission to search my heart.
I choose to believe in Jesus' extravagant
love for me.*

*And from this place, held in love, I ask for the
grace of conviction. I let go of any fear, shame
or pride that stops me seeing clearly the beliefs
which cause me to act in ways contrary to the
love and freedom you've called me to.*

I desire to live by the truth.

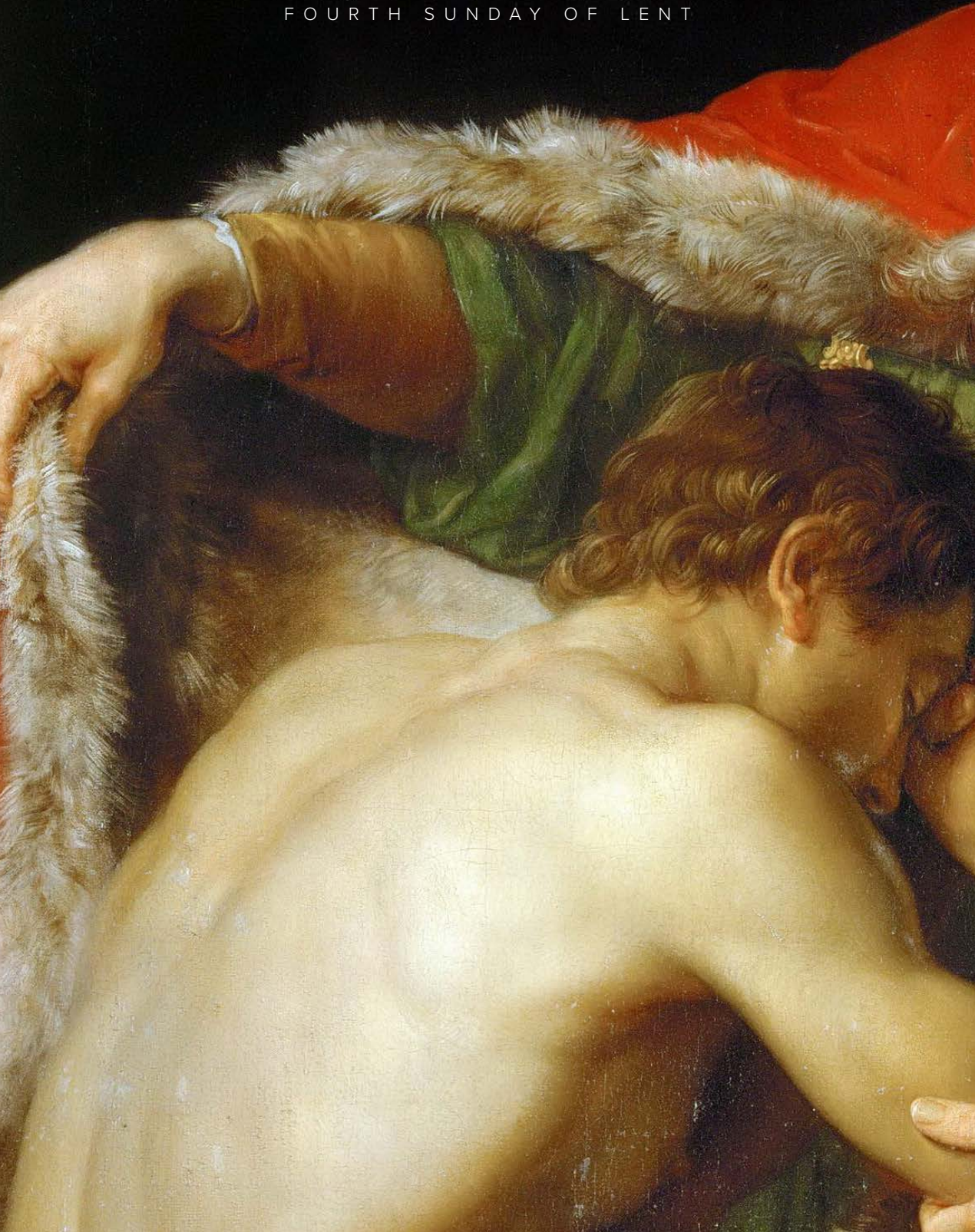
*Grant me the grace to trust that living close
to truth will bring me authentic freedom and
fullness of life. Help me to seek truth always,
no matter the cost.*

*And, may I be so convicted of my identity as a
beloved child of God, that all other beliefs I hold
take their shape from this eternal foundation
Amen.*

MISS TRISH MCCARTHY

THE PRODIGAL SON

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT







The Return of the Prodigal Son

Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787)

“The Return of the Prodigal Son”, c. 1773.

Oil on canvas, 138cm x 100.5cm.

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

Public Domain.

It is *Laetare Sunday*, the halfway mark of Lent, and we pause for a breather. It is indeed a day of rejoicing, for the Church offers to us this most consoling image of God’s love. “Prodigal” can mean lavish, even wasteful. We employ the term usually on the returning son, but it better depicts the boy’s father. This is certainly how the elder son saw his father’s response—wasting his love on a son who had shown nothing but contempt.

The Return of the Prodigal Son was painted by Pompeo Batoni about 1773. He was an Italian painter who displayed great technical knowledge in his portrait work. He became well known in Britain. Many of his customers were on their “Grand Tour”, and on reaching Rome, they would employ this famous portraitist, considered the best Italian painter of his time.

Looking at the painting, the first thing we notice is that the two figures are almost one. How the father had longed for this moment. And, even though the son’s apology is imperfect—he is simply looking for lodgings—his father’s indulgent love overlooks this. The son had never expected

complete restoration to his former life. He would have been overcome by his father’s prodigality. For all of us, it usually takes sin to make us realise the true nature of God. “She must have been forgiven much to love so much” Jesus said of the woman who washed his feet with her tears in the house of Simon, the Pharisee (Luke 7:47).

The father’s face, his embracing arms, his red cape trimmed with fur, all suggest intense comfort, warmth and wealth. Behind the father, there seems to be another red garment, perhaps to clothe his near-naked son? The father’s head is turned slightly downward. His expression is an emotive one; the beard hides the mouth somewhat, but what we see of the lower lip indicates sadness mixed with understanding—sadness because of what the boy has become, but an understanding of human nature.

The father’s head covering, a turban of fine patterned cloth, has at the top the same bright red of the robe. There is a hint of a crown, highlighting the allegorical meaning with the parable of the father to God. The father’s right hand holds the edge of his fur-lined robe above the son’s bowed form, indicating that in the next moment it will be thrown around them both.

The son’s head is bowed, his eyes closed, hardly believing the father’s unconditional welcome. His hands are clasped as if in prayer. His expression is serene, almost as if he were asleep. He appears young, but adult. He wears no shirt or robe, only a plain set of dark red shorts over a white undergarment. His only possession seems to be a roughly-made shallow bowl tied to his waist—a begging bowl? Curiously, this is where Batoni places his signature.

The son’s dress belies poverty, and his only humble possession reveals his desperate situation. He is leaning into his father; his weight rests not on his own legs alone, but a substantial amount on the father. “Lean on God,” Mary MacKillop would say. Batoni has certainly captured the very essence of Christianity—the loving embrace of the eternal God with fallen, desperate humanity.

MGR GRAHAM SCHMITZER

31 MARCH 2019

4th Sunday of Lent

JOSHUA 5:9-12

PSALM 33(34):2-7

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21

LUKE 15:1-3,11-32

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Let us pause and call to mind
God's presence within and among us,
today and always.

Brief pause.

All: Help me to journey beyond the familiar
and into the unknown.
Give me the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with you.

Christ of the mysteries, I trust you to be
stronger than each storm within me.
I will trust in the darkness and know
that my times, even now, are in your hand.
Tune my spirit to the music of heaven,
and somehow, make my obedience
count for you.

(Prayer of St Brendan the Navigator)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

PSALM 33(34):2-7

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

I will bless the Lord at all times,
his praise always on my lips;
in the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad. **R.**

Glorify the Lord with me.
Together let us praise his name.
I sought the Lord and he answered me;
from all my terrors he set me free. **R.**

Look towards him and be radiant;
let your faces not be abashed.
This poor man called, the Lord heard him
and rescued him from all his distress. **R.**

The angel of the Lord is encamped around those
who revere him, to rescue them.
Taste and see that the Lord is good.
He is happy who seeks refuge in him. **R.**

GOSPEL

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.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Pause for silent reflection.

THE MERCIFUL FATHER

Today's Gospel contains arguably the best known and loved story that Jesus told. Those who hear it and read it can find in it their own story. It is called the parable of the prodigal son, but could just as easily be called the parable of the merciful father. We can identify with all three characters in the parable. The father—who clearly represents an all loving and forgiving God—can be for us a model of selfless love. The younger brother is someone we can easily relate to, as he runs away to search for life and makes a terrible mess of things. But, it is the elder brother we need to turn our attention to, because it was his sin Jesus was attempting to highlight.

We would have liked the story to end with the younger son returning home to the warm embrace of his father. The hearers of the story would be wiping tears from their eyes and nodding their heads in approval. But, Jesus goes on to point out the different kinds of sin and sinners. We tend to think of the elder brother as an anticlimax in the parable—the good boy who never left home; the son his parents could be proud of. He is respectable, unlike his younger, ungrateful and immoral brother. This is not how Jesus wants the elder brother to be seen. Sin hides in respectability.

Jesus is saying that it is possible to be religious and still be wrong; to be correct but heartless; to be righteous but unattractive. It is possible to be a good person with a bad disposition.

If I obey the rules, work hard, accept my duties to family and community with a resentful heart, my goodness is shallow. If we tend to act with anger and jealousy when others are brought back into the fold, this is a sure sign that we are not fulfilled in our life or work.

Perhaps, we secretly yearn to be like the younger brother—to be reckless and impulsive in a faraway place. Instead, we stay home and expect to be rewarded for it. There is plenty of evidence

that the elder son is also a sinner. The sin of the younger son was more physical and public. The sin of the elder son was more internal and petty. The younger son acted on his impulses and passions, the elder son repressed them and grew resentful.

The genius of this parable is that it takes us into ourselves and demands that we ask ourselves some hard questions. Am I judgemental and condemning of the person who is guilty of the very sins of which I am most vulnerable? Am I resentful and pouting in my respectability? In our collective share of guilt, do we try and justify sin? These are important questions for individual reflection, but are a digression from the point of the parable.

The father has two problem sons whose issues were different. The sons are not to be dismissed as either good or bad. Simply, they were like us—sinners. The father loved both sons with all his heart, no matter what they did with their lives. Nothing they did could diminish his love for them. The deepest need all of us have, as daughters and sons of God, is to just come home and trust that we will be welcomed by a patient, ever-waiting Father.

FR SEAN CULLEN

SEE PAGE 49 FOR REFLECTION QUESTIONS

SR MARY CHRISTOPHER

As Fr Sean tells us, this is indeed one of the best loved stories in the Bible. Why? Because, as Fr Sean points out, no matter whom we are, we can find ourselves in this story. Who of us does not want to be treated with the tenderness of the father in this story? Who of us have not been the son gone wrong? Who of us has not been the hurting elder son who wanted some attention too? Whoever you are here, the Father is central.

I remember when I was a young nun, there was a principal—Sr Mary Christopher. I was a lowly, far flung newcomer teacher. She was a woman of extraordinary insight and experience. I always got the sense that she was very familiar with the mistakes of other people. Nothing was a surprise to her. In fact, she was really at home with mistakes, and she could admit her own as well. She was unafraid to tackle new ideas, and she gave the staff their head. No one ever felt constrained by her—just the opposite. She treated every pupil with respect, and I know she dealt with some very sad and dysfunctional situations. I never heard her raise her voice. Rather, I often saw her laughing with the children. To the parents, Sr Mary Christopher was an open door. There seemed to be nothing about their lives she could not understand, make allowances for, or encourage. It was a gift to work with her, because she always made allowances for me—for my immaturity and human foibles. She also encouraged my talents and gave me so many opportunities to exercise them. She also gave me the opportunities to sharpen my deficiencies—the latter always with infinite patience. A mistake on my part just meant another chance.

When her term as principal finished, and she moved to another school, we had a send-off for her. In her speech, Sr Mary Christopher told everyone how much they had meant to her over the years. I distinctly remember her very Australian way of ending that speech: “When my

number is up,” she said “and God and I sit down to have a cuppa, he will say to me, ‘Didn’t we have a great time in ... ?’ And, we will talk and remember you all, and we will cry and laugh. We will remember your love, and I will look into the eyes of God and say, “Thank you for sending me there.”

This seems to me to be a real picture of the mind and heart of the Father in this Gospel story. Who is it that you want the Father to be for you? For he will always say, “When I meet you, so you can see me face-to-face, I will tell you what it has meant to me to be your father, to watch you from afar, to welcome you, to encourage you. And, we will laugh and we will cry and we will remember. And, I will thank you so you can hear it. I will thank you for allowing yourself to be part of me. I will thank you again and again for coming home to me.”

I wonder if we could likewise say to the Father: “This is what it has meant for me to be your lost child, or to be your elder child. I remember the times I got lost. I remember how you brought me home, I remember the times I thought I could do life all on my own and you let me, only to pick me up when I couldn’t do it. You truly are Father to me.”

SR HILDA SCOTT OSB

SEE PAGE 49 FOR REFLECTION QUESTIONS

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

GOSPEL REFLECTION

The merciful Father

1. Fr Sean says, “Sin hides in respectability.... It is possible to be a good person with a bad disposition.” How do these lines challenge you and your concept of what is sinful?
2. In our collective share of guilt, how do we try and justify sin?
3. How does this parable inform your understanding and relationship with the Father? How might Jesus be calling you to trust him and receive the love and forgiveness of the Father?

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Sr Mary Christopher

1. Do you have an experience of a “Sr Mary Christopher” in your life? How did they embody the love of the Father for you?
2. Whilst we can all relate to the two sons, each of us is ultimately called to become like the Father? How might you grow more deeply into becoming like the Father in this parable?
3. Like Sr Mary Christopher, describe your “cuppa with Jesus”—when you finally meet him face to face.
4. If the entire world acted like the father in this story, how might the world be different?

PERSONAL REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

- What do you remember of your life with God? Who has he been for you?
- How about spending a few minutes every day beginning your time like this: “I remember God (the time I was so hurt because....),” and then, ending your few minutes with: “I want to tell you God (I came through because you were there....).” You will notice a new closeness between you and God.

CLOSING PRAYER AND INTERCESSIONS

There is nothing stable
but you O my God.
And you are the centre and life of all,
who change,
who trust you as their Father.
who look to you
and are content to put themselves
into your hands.

(John Henry Cardinal Newman)