

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you,
that your prophets be found true.
Hear the prayers of your servant,
and of your people Israel.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Look upon us, O God,
Creator and ruler of all things,
and, that we may feel the working of your
mercy,
grant that we may serve you with all our
heart.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING Exodus 32:7-11.13-14

A reading from the book of Exodus.

The Lord spoke to Moses, "Go down now,
because your people whom you brought out
of Egypt have apostasised. They have been
quick to leave the way I marked out for them;
they have made themselves a calf of molten
metal and have worshipped it and offered it
sacrifice. 'Here is your God, Israel,' they have
cried, 'who brought you up from the land
of Egypt!' I can see how headstrong these
people are! Leave me, now, my wrath shall
blaze out against them and devour them; of
you, however, I will make a great nation."

But Moses pleaded with the Lord his God.
"Lord," he said, "why should your wrath
blaze out against this people of yours whom
you brought out of the land of Egypt with arm
outstretched and mighty hand? Remember
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, your servants
to whom by your own self you swore and
made this promise: I will make your offspring
as many as the stars of heaven, and all this
land which I promised I will give to your
descendants, and it shall be their heritage for
ever." So the Lord relented and did not bring
on the people the disaster he had threatened.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 50

Response:

I will leave this place and go to my father.

SECOND READING 1 Timothy 1:12-17

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to
Timothy.

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given
me strength, and who judged me faithful
enough to call me into his service even
though I used to be a blasphemer and did
all I could to injure and discredit the faith.
Mercy, however, was shown me, because
until I became a believer I had been acting in
ignorance; and the grace of our Lord filled me
with faith and with the love that is in Christ
Jesus. Here is a saying that you can rely on
and nobody should doubt: that Christ Jesus
came into the world to save sinners. I myself
am the greatest of them; and if mercy has
been shown to me, it is because Jesus Christ
meant to make me the greatest evidence of
his inexhaustible patience for all the other
people who would later have to trust in him
to come to eternal life. To the eternal King,
the undying, invisible and only God, be
honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

**May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
enlighten the eyes of our mind,
so that we can see what hope his call holds
for us.**

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 15:1-32

(For shorter form, read between > <)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Luke.

>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:

"What man among you with a hundred
sheep, losing one, would not leave the
ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after
the missing one till he found it? And when
he found it, would he not joyfully take it on
his shoulders and then, when he got home,
call together his friends, and neighbours?
'Rejoice with me,' he would say, 'I have
found my sheep that was lost.' In the same
way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing
in heaven over one repentant sinner than over
ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need
of repentance.

"Or again, what woman with ten drachmas
would not, if she lost one, light a lamp and
sweep out the house and search thoroughly
till she found it? And then, when she had
found it, call together her friends and
neighbours? 'Rejoice with me,' she would
say, 'I have found the drachma I lost.' In
the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing
among the angels of God over one repentant
sinner." <

He also said, "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.<

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

(all bow during the next three lines)

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.**

LOST AND FOUND

(LUKE 15:1-32)

In today's Gospel passage, Luke presents us with the different reactions to the prophetic word of Jesus.

On the one hand, people regarded as socially undesirable are drawing near to him, to listen to him: on the other, the religious leaders are muttering because Jesus welcomes and shares table-fellowship with "sinners". Once more, sharing a meal becomes the reason for division. This is the occasion for Jesus' telling three parables which exemplify God's attitude towards people represented by the tax-collectors and sinners: these are the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son. In all of them, the main character, the shepherd, the woman, the father, is shown as being anxious, either actively searching for what they have lost, or intently watching for the wayward son to return. All are overjoyed when their hopes are fulfilled and a great celebration marks the event.

The positive attitude of the tax-collectors and sinners, the joy which the main characters in the parables show contrasts sharply with the negative standpoint of the religious leaders: Luke personifies this in the character of the elder son in the third parable. He is, in many ways, a tragic figure: although he has stayed at home and done all the right things, he is full of resentment at his father. He does not appreciate what he has or the love his father obviously has for him: the father goes out to speak to him, just as he ran to greet the younger brother. Does he accept his father's invitation, set aside his grudges and join the celebrations? Luke leaves us to finish the story ourselves. ■

SAY

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15)



REFLECT

What is your opinion of the older brother? Do you regard him as selfish and unreasonable, hanging on to his wounded feelings in spite of his father's pleading? Or do you have a sneaking sympathy for him and think that his complaints are justified?

The parables are a trap. They invite us to make a judgment and then to rethink our opinion in the light of the way God sees people and situations. We are presented with two reactions to the returning young man, that of the father and that of the elder brother, and asked, Which of these two characters represents myself? It may well be that the elder brother is jealous of his younger sibling who had the courage, or at least the recklessness, to do what he himself would have liked to do: get away from the constraints of home, kick over the traces and live a life of riot. It is interesting that his comment about his brother's indiscretions with women comes apparently from his own imagination rather than from the report Luke gives us of the younger one's activities. Wishful thinking?

We are also being challenged as a church as to how we treat people who return after a time away. They may well be coming back because they realise how much they need the community and the sacraments. Are we glad or resentful? ■

LEARN

The floor of the house of the woman in the parable would have been made of earth: the coin might therefore have been trodden into the ground.

Luke's pairing of the parables of the man and the sheep and the woman and the coin is typical of his writing.

The younger son having to look after pigs is a sign of his being reduced to utter degradation: no Jewish audience could have imagined a situation more humiliating.

DO

When someone comes back to church and the sacraments, make them feel welcome.

