



## Holy Family Parish Northeast Mallee

Incorporating the Communities of

St Mary's Sea Lake, Sacred Heart Culgoa, St Michael's Lalbert, St Joseph's Lake Boga, St Joseph's Nandaly, S's Peter & Paul Quambatook & St Mary's Swan Hill

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### 4TH SUNDAY OF LENT 27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022

## THE FATHER'S AWESOME LOVE FOR US

Jesus told many parables to describe God our Father's incredible and unconditional love for us. Today's Gospel is perhaps the most well known of them; the story of the Prodigal Son. Touching on this beautiful parable, a friend passed the following story on to me.

*Many years ago, I spent sometime living and travelling overseas. I remember an Irish priest reading this gospel at Mass one day and speaking afterward about his time as a chaplain in one of Ireland's worst prisons which housed the country's most hardened criminals. Every week the priest would visit the prison and make himself available to anyone who wanted to talk or pray or receive the sacraments. Without fail, every week, he was told by one particular man – 'Not interested Father - Not interested Father - Not interested Father -.'*

*One week out of the blue, after his usual greeting, Father instead heard this man say; 'You've got 2 minutes.' Not wanting to waste any of this time on his own words, the priest opened his bible and read the story of the Prodigal Son. As soon as he was finished, the man replied 'Read that again.' And so he did. When he was finished the second time, the man said 'Read that again Father.' After the third reading, visibly moved, the man asked the priest. 'Is that how God loves us?' 'It is,' replied the priest. 'But me?' asked the man, 'Is that how God loves me?' Again the priest replied, 'It is.'*

*This pierced the man deeply, and the walls he had spent many years building around his heart came crashing down. The floodgates opened and he cried and cried. He eagerly awaited the priest's weekly visits from then on, and happily received the sacraments, making a good and full confession, so that when the time came for the man to leave this world, he did so in peace – looking forward to the embrace of his loving Father patiently waiting for him.*

*The most important thing we need to remember about this story is what that man in prison learnt of the Father's love – that is how God loves us too. And he is inviting us to come back to him – to meet him especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation – so he can pour out his love and mercy over us too.*

As a parish we are very excited for the children who are preparing to encounter God's merciful love through the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. But this gif is not reserved for just for them, there is always an open invitation for all of us to experience God's mercy and forgiveness through this great Sacrament of healing. It is one that you can come back to many times in your lives - any place, anytime – it doesn't matter how long it's been. God's forgiveness and love is always waiting for you.

#### **Parish Contact Details:**

St Mary's Presbytery 62 Splatt St  
Po Box 71 Swan Hill, Vic 3585

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**Office Hrs:** Tues, Wed and Fri 10:30 -2:30

#### **Parish Priest**

Fr James Kerr

#### **Parish Admin Officers:**

Glenda Klabbers

Mary Kennedy

#### **Child Protection Officers:**

Damian and Karen Kelly

#### **Child Safe Church**

Here in the Parish of Holy Family North East Mallee we follow the Child Safe Standards outlined by the Victorian Government and we also implement procedures and standards as directed by the Ballarat Diocesan Office.



*Please keep in your prayers*

**Recent Deaths**

Teresa Prochilo

**ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATH**

Bill Kelly, Olive Burns, Gloria Langerak, Michael Brennan, Joe Wilkinson, James Peter Maher, Greg McKerrow, Mary Lloyd, Patricia Jackson, Vince Carpenteri, Francesco Fazzalori, Bernie Ryan, Martin Walsh.

**SICK LIST**

Jayden Williams, Margaret Foott, Jarrod Crimmins, Jack Donohue, Jude Lewis, Yvonne Annan, Sarah Kenny, Michael Bourke, Bridget Phyland, Carmel Ryan

**THIS WEEKEND (26<sup>TH</sup>/27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH)**

Saturday 6:30pm Swan Hill  
Sunday: 8.30am Quambatook  
Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

**WEEKDAYS IN SWAN HILL**

*(Fr James away on retreat this week)*

Tuesday: NO MASS  
Wednesday: NO MASS  
Thurs: NO MASS  
Friday: NO MASS  
Saturday: Confessions 9-10am  
Mass (1<sup>st</sup> Saturday) 10am

**NEXT WEEKEND (2<sup>ND</sup>/3<sup>RD</sup> APRIL)**

Saturday 6:30pm Swan Hill  
Sunday 8.30am Sea Lake  
Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

**COLLECTIONS LAST WEEKEND**

1<sup>st</sup> (Presbytery) \$ 1132  
2<sup>nd</sup> (Parish) \$ 858

**NOTICES**

**FIRST RECONCILIATIONS FOR CHILDREN**

We welcome all the families who have come in preparation for their child's first confession. These will be celebrated on Tuesday April 5<sup>th</sup> in three 'shifts', first at 5pm, then 6pm and finally 7pm. Spreading things out this way will mean the experience won't be rushed for the children, and will also give families the opportunity to experience God's reconciliation as well by making their own confessions if they wish. If any one missed the introduction, that is no drama. Just tell them to get in contact with us and we will help them get ready for the day.



**FRIDAY FAMILY FISH AND CHIPS**

We are planning a special Lenten treat for our parish children this Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April, starting at 5:30pm. We will gather in the PFC for some fun activities and prayer, before finishing with some fish and chips! All families welcome. An RSVP would be appreciated so we have an idea of numbers to cater for- just touch base with Mary or myself or email [mk.holyfamily@yahoo.com](mailto:mk.holyfamily@yahoo.com)

**PARISH PRAYER**

God our Father, through the intercession of the Holy Family our patron, we pray that you bless this parish so that we may love you more. Help parents to be a good example to their children and our youth to grow in strength as good Christians. Encircle our families with your loving care; to the sick and the weak grant health; to the aged bring serenity and to those in sorrow joy. May we grow stronger in faith and may our love for one another become deeper in our daily life. Amen.

**St Mary's Primary School Sea Lake**

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**St Mary's Primary School Swan Hill**

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**St Mary MacKillop College**

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## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Lk 15:18

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!  
I will rise and go to my Father and tell him:  
Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.  
Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

## **GOSPEL** Lk 15:1-3. 11-32

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:

'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 is 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.*



### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

Why were Jesus' actions of welcoming and dining with sinners so scandalous?

In what way is the parable a response to the accusation of the Pharisees and scribes?

Which aspects of the story could be regarded as 'unpredictable' or out of the ordinary expectation?

How might the original audience have expected the father to react to his son's homecoming?

When have you been like the lost son and acted in haste only to later regret your actions?

How do you respond to the older son's reaction?

Have you ever had the opportunity to respond to a situation with extravagant love as the father did?

### **Readings Next Week: 4th Sunday of Lent**

First Reading: Is 43:16-21

Second Reading: Phil 3:8-14

Gospel: Jn 8:1-11

**FIRST READING** Jos 5:9-12

A reading from the book of Joshua

*The people of God went to the promised land and there kept the passover.*

The Lord said to Joshua, 'Today I have taken the shame of Egypt away from you.'

The Israelites pitched their camp at Gilgal and kept the Passover there on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening in the plain of Jericho. On the morrow of the Passover they tasted the produce of that country, unleavened bread and roasted ears of corn, that same day. From that time, from their first eating of the produce of that country, the manna stopped falling. And having manna no longer, the Israelites fed from that year onwards on what the land of Canaan yielded.

*The Word of the Lord.*

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** Ps 33:2-7. R. v.9**(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.

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.

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.) Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.****Second Reading** 2 Cor 5:17-21

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians  
*God reconciled us to himself through Christ.*

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on his reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

*The Word of the Lord.*

***The Gospel Reading is on the inside page this week.***

**SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY** by Brendan Byrne SJ

The parable told in the Gospel is the final and largest of three parables in Luke 15 (the first being the Lost Sheep, the second the Lost Coin). Jesus tells all three as a defence against criticism of the welcome he gives to 'tax collectors (social outcasts) and sinners' and his 'eating with them' – his celebration with them of their discovery of the mercy and hospitality of God. The three parables defend this behaviour in the light of a particular image of God that, cumulatively, they build up and project – a God who displays love to an extravagant and, humanly speaking, foolish degree.

The first two short parables, with some slight variation, display a pattern that goes like this: someone loses something precious, makes a 'foolish' response to find it finds it, rejoices and calls for a communal celebration. The great parable – with a significant addition (the response of the older brother) – follows essentially the same pattern. The father loses a son. The young man's behaviour is very callous. Culturally understood, he is in effect saying to the father: 'You're as good as dead to me. Give now what I'm due to inherit when you at last are.'

The parable vividly describes the gradual dehumanisation of the young man. Reduced to wanting to eat the pigs' food – what could be worse for a Jew! – 'he comes to his senses' But this is hardly a moment of true conversion. He is calculating: 'I can't go back as a son. But at least if I can get back as a servant, I'll be clothed and well fed.' The father, the parable hints, has been watching day and night for his son's return. Seeing him afar off, he is overcome with compassion. He runs out to meet the boy, embraces and kisses him tenderly. In the culture of the time, for a middle-aged man of means to run in public, to display extravagant signs of affection to a son who has caused the family disgrace is foolish behaviour in the utmost degree – as the older brother will soon so 'reasonably' point out. But this is not the end. The father does not allow the young man to finish his prepared speech about coming back as a servant. Bring out the best robe, the ring, sandals – all symbols of full reinstatement as son. And then the great communal celebration. Why? Because the one who was dead has come back to life; the lost one has been found.

Let's admit: the older brother has very reasonable grounds for complaint. His 'conversion' to the way his father sees things and behaves is difficult. We never learn whether he goes in and shares in the music and dancing or whether anger and resentment keep him forever outside. And that is the real bite of the parable. Are you inside with the younger brother joining in the celebration of God's mercy or does anger and resentment keep you stamping your foot with the older son outside? Like so many of Jesus' parables this is one is basically saying, 'Come to the feast'. The only blockage is what may lie, unconverted, in your heart.