

## Children's liturgy for Fourth Sunday of Lent (Year C)

### Preparation of the worship space

Colour: purple or rose

### Song suggestions:

Table of plenty (632, Laudate), All are welcome (458, Laudate)

### Welcome

Today's gospel is the story known as the Prodigal Son. It's about a child who did lots of things wrong, but who went to say sorry, and so his father forgave him. Let's listen and think some more about this today.

**Opening prayer:** Loving God, we know that you always love us and are ready to forgive us. Help us to be truly sorry when we get things wrong and to do all that we can to make the world a more loving place. Amen.

**First reading (optional):** Joshua 5:9-12

**Psalm:** Psalm 33:2-7 r. 9

**Gospel acclamation:** *everyone stands and sings the acclamation together. For Lent we use an acclamation that doesn't use the word 'Alleluia'.*

**Gospel:** Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

One day when many tax collectors and other outcasts came to listen to Jesus, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law started grumbling, "This man welcomes outcasts and even eats with them!" So Jesus told them this parable:

"There was once a man who had two sons. The younger one said to him, 'Father, give me my share of the property now.' So the man divided his property between his two sons. After a few days the younger son sold his part of the property and left home with the money. He went to a country far away, where he wasted his money in reckless living. He spent everything he had. Then a severe famine spread over that country, and he was left without a thing. So he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him out to his farm to take care of the pigs. He wished he could fill himself with the bean pods the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything to eat. At last he came to his senses and said, 'All my father's hired workers have more than they can eat, and here I am about to starve! I will get up and go to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired workers."' So he got up and started back to his father.

"He was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity, and he ran, threw his arms round his son, and kissed him. 'Father,' the son said, 'I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.' But the father called his servants. 'Hurry!' he said. 'Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate

with a feast! For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.' And so the feasting began.

"In the meantime the elder son was out in the field. On his way back, when he came close to the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him, 'What's going on?' 'Your brother has come back home,' the servant answered, 'and your father has killed the prize calf, because he got him back safe and sound.'

The elder brother was so angry that he would not go into the house; so his father came out and begged him to come in. But he answered his father, 'Look, all these years I have worked for you like a slave, and I have never disobeyed your orders. What have you given me? Not even a goat for me to have a feast with my friends! But this son of yours wasted all your property on prostitutes, and when he comes back home, you kill the prize calf for him!' 'My son,' the father answered, 'you are always here with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be happy, because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.'"

*(Gospel passage taken from Good News Translation® and used with permission, see details below\*)*

**Gospel reflection:** What do you remember from today's reading?

Jesus was spending time with people who were not very popular in his time. He spent time with tax collectors, and those who others thought were doing wrong. Jesus sat down and ate with them.

Some other people complained and so Jesus told them a story. Why do you think he told them this story? Jesus often told stories to help people better know and understand God, so what happened in the story he told us today?

A man had two sons. What did the younger son do? He took his half of his father's money and went off and spent it all.

What happened when the son had run out of money?

There was a famine – which means that many people were hungry because there wasn't enough food. What job did the son do to try to earn some money?

The son started to look after someone else's pigs. He was so hungry that he would have liked to eat the pigs' food, but no one would let him have it. How do you think he must have felt to know that no one was willing to share with him?

So the son set off home to see his father – to say sorry and to say that he would work as a servant in his house. How do you think the son was feeling?

How do you feel when you know you have done something wrong? Is it always easy to say sorry?

When he was a long way off, the father saw his son and rushed out to meet him, giving him a big hug. How do you think the father felt to see his son again after all this time?

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For more children's liturgy resources and illustrations see [cafod.org.uk/childrensliturgy](http://cafod.org.uk/childrensliturgy)

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How did the son expect his father to feel? But what did the father do after the son said sorry?

The father threw a big party! He was so happy that his son had returned to him, safe and sound. The father forgave his son for all that he had done and invited everyone to a big meal to celebrate.

The elder brother was not so pleased. Have you ever been cross with your brother or sister or a good friend?

Why do you think the elder brother was angry that his father was throwing a party? He was upset because he had done everything right, but his father had never thrown him a party. He was jealous of how much the father loved his younger brother.

But what did the father say? The father reminded the elder brother that he loved him very much and that everything that he had would belong to him one day.

God loves us all. When we say sorry, God forgives us for the things that we have done wrong, just like the father in this story forgives his son. God is always happy when we come back to him.

How does it feel to know that God always loves you?

Jesus shared food with all different sorts of people. And the father in Jesus' story welcomed his son back to share in the feast, even though he had not always done the right thing.

God welcomes everyone to the feast. It doesn't matter who we are, where we come from or what we've done, we all have the right to share in the food that God has given for all people.

And we have to do our best to make sure that all people can get their fair share as well.

So perhaps this week, we can do our best to say sorry for the times when we haven't done the right thing, especially when we haven't shared very well with others?

But let's also make a change, let's try to share more with others and work together so that all people are able to join in the feast of good food that God gives for us all.

**Intercessions:** *You may want to ask the children to offer their own prayers or you can use the suggestions below.*

We offer our prayers to God, who loves and forgives us all:

We pray for the Church: that she may follow Jesus' example of forgiveness, love and welcome to all people, especially those who are poor or who are finding life difficult. Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for all people who are hungry or far away from home: that they may find a place of shelter, safety and welcome. Lord, in your mercy...

We pray for our parish, family and friends: that we may be welcoming and forgiving of each other. Lord, in your mercy...

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**Closing prayer:** God of life, you want all people to have enough to eat and to share with each other. Work through us so that this hope may become a reality. Amen.

### **Activity suggestions**

Share the activity sheet with the children and invite them to colour in the picture of the son being welcomed home by his father. Encourage them to try out the other activities on the sheet at home during the week.

Today is Mothering Sunday. Share the prayer on the activity sheet with the children or encourage them to write their own, thanking God for all those who care for them.

Invite the children to write a grace to use at a special occasion like the feast in the gospel story – asking forgiveness for the things we have done wrong and giving thanks that all people are welcome and invited by God to the feast.

Remind the children to tell the people at home all that they have heard and thought about in the liturgy today. Encourage them to do their best to forgive those who hurt them in the coming week, to welcome others into their games and to share what they have with each other.

For more activities and resources for children to use this Lent visit [cafod.org.uk/primary](http://cafod.org.uk/primary)

\*Gospel passage taken from:

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