***LSW***

children

*You may wish to end up with the second half of the parable:*

“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 refuse 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 back to life; he was lost and is found.’ “

# Penitential

###### If there is time, you may want to pray the *I confess* together.

Year C

#### Fourth Sunday in Lent

**Images**

Reconciliation

**Points to note**

This reading is one of the most best loved and best-known parables in the Gospels. In addition to being very vivid, it has a father and it has sons in it that will make it appeal to children. The theme underlying the parable however is very deep and unless deliberately explained well, may take it over the heads of children. The key here, as usual, is to draw parallels with everyday events of a child’s life.

I confess

**I confess to almighty God,**

**and you, my brothers and sisters,**

**that I have sinned through my own fault,**

**in my thoughts and in my words,**

**in what I have done,**

**and in what I have failed to do;**

**and I ask blessed Mary, ever virgin,**

**all the angels and saints,**

**and you, my brothers and sisters,**

**to pray for me to the Lord our God**

**Amen.**

As it is rather long, I have separated the reading into two parts: the one dealing with the younger son to be read in the liturgy while the one on the older son to be discussed with the children, if there is time. How often have we encountered it ourselves? However, it also deals with sibling jealousy and parents’ extravagant love. How often have we encountered that also?

**Liturgy**

Acclamation before the Gospel

Praise and honour to you, O Christ!

I will leave this place and go to my father and say:

“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.”

Praise and honour to you, O Christ!

## Gospel

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Luke

*All:*  Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ

(Lk 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 has 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 experience a 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 filed 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 I am 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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

*All:* Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

**Discussion**

Who are the people in the story? *Father and two sons.* Do you know that God is in the story? *The father.* If God is the father, who are the sons? *Not Jesus – us.*

*Discuss how God gets upset with us when we are not good. Use the example of the parents being upset when children tell a lie. Get the children to talk about how upset their parents get.* What do Mom and Dad do when they get angry?

Will they get angry forever? Will they lock you in the room and throw away the key? *Get the children to talk about how they felt when their parents are angry with them. What did they do to help their parents get over the anger? A hug, say sorry, repair the damage, do chores in the house.*

*Discuss whether their parents do eventually get over the anger? Did saying sorry help? Get the children to see that Mom & Dad’s starting point of getting over their anger is often when the children say sorry or do something to express remorse.*

*Discuss how they felt when their parents’ anger is no more. Discuss also whether they keep remembering that their parents were angry and why. Get them to see that their parents’ anger will easily be rekindled if they repeat their error.*

*Bring it back to the reading. Explain how the son felt when he was miserable and away from his father. Explain that the father was upset at what the son did. Explain why the son felt a need to return to the father’s house and point out that if he did not return (ie., apologise) he would still be miserable taking care of pigs. Link up with what the children & their parents felt in their own situation at home.*