

This Week's Readings

First Reading: Joshua 5: 9-12.

When the people of Israel arrive at the home promised to them, they find that his care for them continues.

Second Reading: I Corinthians 5: 17-21.

Through Christ we are reconciled to God: our faults are not held against us.

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

The sinner returns home to a tremendous welcome by his father.



Points for Reflection

Almost every day we experience sin. But, strangely enough, like the Pharisees, we like sin and despise sinners.

On the contrary, Jesus hated sin, but loved sinners. And, precisely because of this, he met with opposition from the religious leaders up to the death on the Cross. The introductory sentence of **today's Gospel** gives us the right interpretation of the so called parable of the prodigal son, as it points to the background of Jesus' teaching.

The Scribes and Pharisees were upset to see Jesus associating himself with well known sinners. Jesus spoke today's parable in order to bring out the idea (which is the corner-stone of the whole New Covenant) that God willed the salvation of sinners, and was eager to forgive their sins. Jesus wished to impress on his listeners the truth that God is an understanding and loving Father, whose mercy is greater and stronger than any sin. God is a Father always looking for us with open arms, in order to take us back as his children, after even the most foolish of mistakes and the most tragic of sins.

The condition of sinful mankind is well symbolized by the prodigal son. We are all sinners, because we, too, wish to build our own existence, without depending on God, our heavenly Father. Sin is just this: wanting to become independent of God. And this is exactly what men and women have wanted to do throughout the history of mankind. This is also what we so often want to do.

The loving father of the parable symbolizes God. What a great love the father has for his younger son! He, however, shows no less love for the elder son. Though each son fails in his own way, the father never

stops loving them. He regards them both as his sons, regardless of their shortcomings.

This is the same with God. His love for us was made visible through Jesus Christ, His Son. Jesus, indeed, has come for all men: for those who do not acknowledge they are sinners and for those who do. His heart is mercifully open to all. No sin can constitute a barrier between himself and us; nor can anyone claim for himself any privilege before God: no keeping of commandments, no long service in the Father's house can become a "right" to God's love: God's love is based only on his free initiative. Therefore, it is gratuitous and universal. What makes us belong to the family of God and be loved by him is not what we do or do not do, but only God's grace. God's love for us, in fact, precedes even our own existence. Our own existence itself is a result of God's gratuitous love.

This truth about God's gratuitous and universal love, revealed to us by his Son Jesus Christ, was not acceptable to the Scribes and Pharisees. They would never have included the sinners among the "beloved" children of God. Proud of being virtuous, they would never mingle with them. The elder brother of the parable represents them. Like the elder brother, they remain in the Father's house and obey all his commandments, but are unable to share their Father's happiness for the return home of those brothers who have come from death to life again.

Jesus, in his teachings and in his life, wants to make the truth concerning God's gracious and universal love plain to all. The Scribes and Pharisees do not accept such a God; therefore, they do not accept a Messiah revealing such a God. They oppose him. However, he does not give in. He carries out his mission, preferring to be crucified rather than betray such a God. And by

doing so, he becomes the perfect image of God, the Father of mankind.

By being followers of Jesus Christ:

- We believe in God's merciful love for us sinners.
- But, as Jesus Christ did, we, too, have to make God's merciful love visible in our lives

by welcoming sinners in our turn. The Father, who loves us, wants us to imitate him in his mercy. If we, like the elder son, exclude some brothers from our love, we automatically exclude ourselves from God's love.

- "O Lord, make us instruments of reconciliation and peace!"

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Phone:	Office hours: 27922967 (with answering machine) After office hours: 27920181 Fax: 27922967	Eucharistic Celebrations: Sundays: 9 am (English) 7.45 am (Chinese) 10.30 am (Chinese)
Parish Priest:	Fr Carlo Tei (E-mail: carlottei@gmail.com) Fr Sergio Ticozzi, Fr Augustine Zaw, Sr Mary Leung (helping on Sundays)	Anticipated Sunday Mass Saturdays: 6.00 pm (English) 7.30 pm (Chinese) Public holidays: 8.00 am (Chinese) Weekdays: 7.00 am (Chinese)
Secretary:	Miss Tse Choi Ping Office hours: Mon-Fridays: 9.00am – 1.00pm; 2.00pm – 6.00pm Saturdays: 10.00am – 12 noon Sundays: 8.45am – 12 noon	Confessions: Sundays before Mass; Weekdays on call
Parish Council	Chairlady: Miss Candy Chan Tel: 23265322	Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: Thursdays: 2.30 pm 1 st Thursday of the month 8.00 pm

Kids' Corner

Colour the picture of the Prodigal Son's return

