

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT



## Seek Forgiveness

O God, rich in mercy and full of compassion, you give life to your followers. We give thanks for your abundant care for us. When we sin, we turn from you and dwell in darkness, but you patiently await our return to your arms. Rescue us from the pleasures that lead us astray. Give us courage to seek forgiveness so that we may be welcomed into your household and share in the banquet you have prepared. When we cry out to you, O Lord, you hear us and we rejoice in your mercy. May our sharing in the feast of life lead us to love others generously. Grant that we may always taste the goodness of the Lord. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 6, 2016

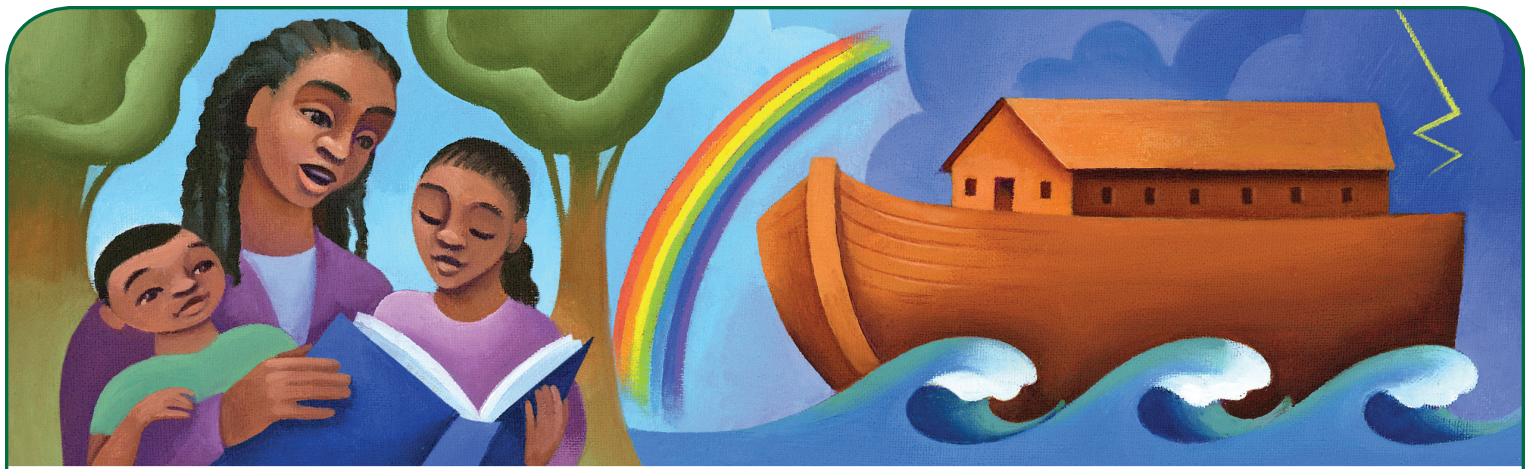
## Abundance



*Today's Readings: Joshua 5:9a, 10–12; Psalm 34:2–3, 4–5, 6–7; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Luke 15:1–3, 11–32.* After hearing today's readings, the first word that comes to mind is *abundance*. In the First Reading, God replaces the manna that nourished the Israelites with the yield of the land of Canaan. In the Second Reading, the “old things have passed away” and we are made new creations in Christ. In the Gospel, the Father celebrates the return of his prodigal son. Finally, the psalm invites us to “taste and see” God's goodness, to relish in the abundant grace he showers upon us.

Let us take a closer look at the Gospel. The story of the prodigal son is probably one of the best-known stories in the New Testament. In some ways, we are all like the son who

takes his share of the inheritance and leaves the safety of his Father's house to explore the world. After being consumed by sin and approaching the verge of death (physical or spiritual), he returns home. The story invites us to reflect on God's abundant love and mercy. No matter how far we are from God or how much we've squandered, God is watching out for us and ready to embrace us. The story calls us to conversion, to repent for the sins that have blinded our judgment. Our reconciliation prepares a place for us at the festive banquet where God's love is overflowing. Take some time each day this week to place yourself in the story as a different character in the narrative and notice your reaction and what you might need to pray for as we journey toward Easter.



## THIS WEEK AT HOME

**Monday, March 7, 2016**

### Optional Memorial of Sts. Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs

Sts. Perpetua and Felicity were martyred around the year 203 because they refused to renounce their faith in Christ. Their encounter with the Risen Christ changed and saved them; their love for Christ was so strong they couldn't imagine denying him. How do you praise the Lord for rescuing you? In memory of the martyrdom of these saints, you might want to consider making hot cross buns sometime this week. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 65:17–21; Psalm 30:2 and 4, 5–6, 11–12a and 13b; John 4:43–54.*

**Tuesday, March 8, 2016**

### Waters of Salvation

The sacred river in this passage from Ezekiel brings new life to the wilderness of Judah. During the Easter season, we sing a verse from this passage to remind us that we have been restored to life in our Baptism into Christ. We are about halfway through Lent. What in your desert needs the waters of salvation? One of the corporal works of mercy is visiting the sick. Do you have sick friends or family who might be cheered by a visit from you? *Today's Readings: Ezekiel 47:1–9, 12; Psalm 46:2–3, 5–6, 8–9; John 5:1–16.*

**Wednesday, March 9, 2016**

### Restore

While in captivity, Israel had lost hope and thought God had abandoned them, but Isaiah reassures them that is not the case and God will save the prisoners and restore Zion to its glory. We too can find ourselves in exile and hopeless. We need Jesus to restore us and to trust that God will never forget us. From today's First Reading, we may want to consider the corporal work of mercy, visiting the imprisoned. Whom do you know that needs to be reassured of God's promise? *Today's Readings: Isaiah 49:8–15; Psalm 145:8–9, 13cd–14, 17–18; John 5:17–30.*

**Thursday, March 10, 2016**

### Idols

When the Israelites turn away from God and build an idol to worship, Moses implores the Lord not to unleash his wrath. Today we are invited to think about the idols in our lives that keep us from seeing or trusting God. What causes you to turn away from God? How might you invite others to remember they are God's chosen ones? Find a painting online or at a museum that depicts the First Reading and meditate on the image and Scripture passage. *Today's Readings: Exodus 32:7–14; Psalm 106:19–20, 21–22, 23; John 5:31–47.*

**Friday, March 11, 2016**

### Messiah

John's Gospel account gives the impression that Jesus has stirred things up. Again, we hear that "they" are trying to kill him. Near the end of the passage, Jesus identifies himself with the Father, which indicates he is the Messiah. The people of Jerusalem knew his origins and so doubted that he was the Messiah. Jesus affirms that his authority comes from God. The tone in the Gospel narrative is beginning to shift more clearly toward the Passion. You may want to consider attending the Stations of the Cross as one of your Lenten disciplines. *Today's Readings: Wisdom 2:1a, 12–22; Psalm 34:17–18, 19–20, 21 and 23; John 7:1–2, 10, 25–30.*

**Saturday, March 12, 2016**

### Messiah, Take 2

The Gospel today continues yesterday's theme. As we draw closer to the celebration of the Triduum, the Jesus of John's Gospel asserts that he was sent by God and is obedient to God's will. Like Jesus, we too can be pursued or falsely accused; and so like the psalmist, we seek refuge with our God. These pericopes from John's Gospel account can be hard to grapple with. Try reading all of chapters 7 and 8. Then place yourself in the story. Which character(s) do you identify with? How would you react to Jesus? *Today's Readings: Jeremiah 11:18–20; Psalm 7:2–3, 9bc–10, 11–12; John 7:40–53.*

