

# Jesus Welcomes Us Back

## I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

### FIRST READING (Jos 5:9a, 10-12)

*Israel now free from Egypt*

<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said to Joshua: Today I have removed the reproach of Egypt from you.<sup>e</sup>

*Passover Celebration*

<sup>10/</sup> While the Israelites were encamped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they celebrated the **Passover** on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month.

*Eating of the Produce of the Land*

<sup>\*</sup> <sup>11</sup>On the day after the **Passover** they ate of the produce of the land in the form of unleavened cakes and parched grain. On that same day <sup>12</sup>after they ate of the produce of the land, the manna ceased. No longer was there manna for the Israelites, who that year ate of the yield of the land of Canaan.<sup>g</sup>

**THE FOCUS: The Passover**

### REFLECTIONS

God brings to fulfillment the promise he made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to Moses and to his people Israel.

The Israelites are finally home. The mission of God is accomplished.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7)

**TASTE AND SEE THE GOODNESS OF THE LORD.**

### SECOND READING (2 Cor 5:17-21)

*New creation*

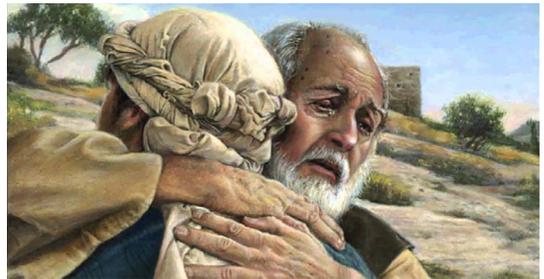
<sup>17</sup>So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.

*Description of God, the reconciler*

<sup>18</sup>\* And all this is from God, who has **reconciled** us to himself through Christ

*Ministry of reconciliation*

and given us the ministry of **reconciliation**. <sup>19/</sup> namely, God was **reconciling** the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting



to us the message of **reconciliation**.

*Ministry of reconciliation in action*

<sup>20m</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be **reconciled** to God. <sup>21\*</sup> "For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

**THE FOCUS: Reconciliation**

### REFLECTIONS

This Lenten season calls us to be reconciled with God. We leave sin behind and live according to the will of God.

As enlightened and reconciled Christians, we are enjoined to broker reconciliation of our brethren with God. God has done everything to reconcile us with him; we too should do everything to become instruments of reconciliation.

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### GOSPEL READING (Lk 15:1-3, 11-32)

<sup>1\*</sup> "The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him, <sup>2b</sup> but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." <sup>3</sup> So to them he addressed this parable. <sup>11</sup> Then he said, "A man had two sons, <sup>12</sup> and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. <sup>13g</sup> After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. <sup>14</sup> When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. <sup>15</sup> So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. <sup>16</sup> And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. <sup>17</sup> Coming to his senses he thought, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from

hunger. <sup>18</sup>I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup>I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers." <sup>20</sup>So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup>His son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son." <sup>22</sup>But his father ordered his servants, "Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup>Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, <sup>24</sup>because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found." Then the celebration began. <sup>25</sup>Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. <sup>27</sup>The servant said to him, "Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound." <sup>28</sup>He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup>He said to his father in reply, "Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. <sup>30</sup>But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf." <sup>31</sup>He said to him, "My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup>But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found."

**THE FOCUS: Reconciliation**

## COMMENTARY

- What title would you like to give this parable?
- The Gospel Reading is divided into two parts:
  - Vv. 1-3 Introduction / reason for telling the parable and Vv. 11-32 The Parable (only in Luke).
- The younger son, the prodigal son, represents sinners eating and drinking with Jesus.
- The older son, who appears much later in the story, represents the Pharisees and scribes who refuse to join the meal.
- The parable is an attempt to convince the Pharisees and scribes to associate with Jesus for the sinners and tax collectors have gone ahead of them.
- The ring, the robe and sandals are signs of the restoration of the original dignity which is lost as a result of living independently from God.
- The meal is a sign of reconciliation, openness to what Jesus can offer to them in their lives.

## REFLECTIONS

Who are sinners according to the Gospel Reading?

Those who distance themselves from Jesus.

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## II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading talks about coming to the promised land, highlighted with meals (passover, local food). The Second Reading, about reconciliation. The Gospel is on coming home, being reconciled with the Father.

### How to develop your homily

Talk about eating together with your friends and family. (*Happy, good for bonding, etc.*) Secular meaning of eating: it is not only to fill our stomachs and nourishment; it is part of our culture. Meals, banquets, parties are occasions to develop relationships and friendships. Feasts, agapes are nice occasions to know people at their best and to show our best. It is a great honor to be invited for a meal. We honor our host by dressing up. From the religious point of view, meals are replete with meanings.

The First Reading mentions the Passover Meal (*celebration of Freedom*) The Second Reading has nothing to do with meals, but reconciliation. Indirectly, we can talk about meals here, because we as a family or community cannot have good meals if we are not reconciled with one another. Reconciliation is a pre-requisite to a meaningful meal. The Gospel Reading is an invitation of Jesus to join his meal. He wants to be reconciled with sinners (vice versa). Here meal does not only mean eating and drinking, but listening to his words, learning from him, being identified with him. Meals accordingly are signs of reconciliation, signs of our acceptance of God's gift of salvation to us.

The self-righteous find it hard to accept the invitation of Jesus, because they think their "level" is lowered if they do so. The unreconciled will always find a way to evade meals with their loved ones. They delay their coming, they eat somewhere. But the standard of right and wrong comes from Jesus only; not from themselves.

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## III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Why are fiestas important to us? Do we reach out to our enemies during these times? (HM)