

## FIRST READING – C LENT 4

A reading from the book of Joshua.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

The Lord said to Joshua,  
“Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.”

While the children of Israel were camped in Gilgal  
they kept the Passover  
in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month  
in the plains of Jericho.

Gilgal = GIL-gal

On the day after the Passover, on that very day,  
they ate the produce of the land,  
unleavened cakes and parched grain.

The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land,  
and the children of Israel no longer had manna;  
they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Canaan = KAY-nuhn

Pause for **THREE** seconds  
then look up at the people  
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## SECOND READING – C LENT 4

A reading from the second letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:

everything old has passed away;

see, everything has become new!

All this is from God,

who reconciled us to himself through Christ,

and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;

that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself,

not counting their trespasses against them,

and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

So we are ambassadors for Christ,

since God is making his appeal through us;

we beg you on behalf of Christ,

be reconciled to God.

For our sake God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin,

so that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God.

Pause for **THREE** seconds

then look up at the people

and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – C LENT 4

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

*Glory to you, O Lord.*

All the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus.  
And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying,  
“This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

So he told them a parable:

“There was a man who had two sons.

The younger of them said to his father,  
‘Father, give me the share of the property  
that will belong to me.’

So the Father divided his property between them.

A few days later the younger son gathered all he had  
and travelled to a distant country,  
and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

When he had spent everything,  
a severe famine took place throughout that country,  
and he began to be in need.

So he went and hired himself out  
to one of the citizens of that country,  
who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.

The young man would gladly have filled himself  
with the pods that the pigs were eating;  
and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself he said,  
‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare,  
but here I am dying of hunger!

I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him,  
“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;  
I am no longer worthy to be called your son;  
treat me like one of your hired hands.”’

So he set off and went to his father.

But while he was still far off,  
his father saw him and was filled with compassion;  
he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

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Then the son said to him,  
‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;  
I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’  
But the father said to his slaves,  
‘Quickly, bring out a robe – the best one – and put it on him;  
put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.  
And get the fatted calf and kill it,  
and let us eat and celebrate;  
for this son of mine was dead and is alive again;  
he was lost and is found!’  
And they began to celebrate.

Now his elder son was in the field;  
and when he came and approached the house,  
he heard music and dancing.  
He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on.  
He replied, ‘Your brother has come,  
and your father has killed the fatted calf,  
because he has got him back safe and sound.’

Then the elder son became angry and refused to go in.  
His father came out and began to plead with him.  
But he answered his father,  
‘Listen! For all these years  
I have been working like a slave for you,  
and I have never disobeyed your command;  
yet you have never given me even a young goat  
so that I might celebrate with my friends.  
But when this son of yours came back,  
who has devoured your property with prostitutes,  
you killed the fatted calf for him!’

Then the father said to him,  
‘Son, you are always with me,  
and all that is mine is yours.  
But we had to celebrate and rejoice,  
because this brother of yours was dead  
and has come to life;  
he was lost and has been found.’”



## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

### Reading I: Joshua 5:9a, 10-12

Last Sunday's second reading interpreted the manna as a type of the Eucharist. Today's Old Testament reading tells us that the manna ceased when the first Passover was celebrated in the Promised Land.

So, too, the Eucharist will cease when it finds its fulfillment in the messianic banquet of the kingdom of God.

### Responsorial Psalm: 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7

Of this psalm the Jerome Biblical Commentary states: "A wisdom psalm, though it is widely classified as a psalm of thanksgiving."

Chiefly because of verse 8a, which serves as the refrain ("Taste and see the goodness of the Lord"), this psalm was used in the early Church during the time of communion.

### Reading II: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

It is remarkable that Paul should appeal to the very people he calls a "new creation" to be reconciled to Christ.

This is because the community's status as the new creation is not an assured possession but something that must constantly be worked at. To renew that status is the work of the apostolic ministry—the "ministry of reconciliation," as Paul calls it.

God's saving act in Christ and the ongoing work of the apostolic ministry are not to be separated. The second is an extension of the first, part of the same salvation history.

This salvation history is inaugurated by an event in which "for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin." This bold affirmation can best be understood in the light of the Marcan-Matthean word from the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Here Jesus enters the deepest consequences of human sin—our alienation from God. He takes his stand where we are as sinners, under the wrath of God, alienated from him, so that we may become what he, Jesus, is—the righteousness of God.

The Greek Fathers were really saying the same thing when they asserted that Christ partook of our human nature in order that we might become partakers of his divine nature.

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

The second reading provides the right context for the interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son.

This parable is often understood as a simple illustration of God's readiness to forgive in response to repentance, without the necessity of Christ's atoning death on the cross. "There is no place for Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son," it has been said.

But the Jesus of the parables is never promulgating timeless truths of religion and ethics; he is always commenting on what is happening concretely in his own ministry.

The Pharisees were grumbling because Jesus was eating with outcasts (vv. 1-3: the Roman and Lutheran Lectionaries wisely start with this setting, while the Episcopal Lectionary less wisely omits it).

The parable is a comment on Jesus' action in eating with outcasts. He is not left out of the parable for the simple reason that the parable presupposes and interprets his action.

When Jesus eats with outcasts, it is not just humanitarian broadmindedness, as though the laws of God or the Pharisaic regulations did not matter; it is God breaking through the condemnation of his own law in order to reach out and save the lost.

Reginald H. Fuller