

## Fourth Sunday of Lent

### The son who came back

#### INTRODUCTION

We all know how good we feel when we say sorry and make up after a quarrel. Jesus told a story to show that when we forgive, and are forgiven, we are filled with great joy and a feeling of peace.

#### SIGN OF THE CROSS

#### LIGHT THE CANDLES

Read these words (*cf Proverbs 4:18-19*):

The path to our heavenly Father is like the rising sun, getting brighter and brighter as we draw closer to God.

#### SORRY

God calls us to love each other and to change our hearts if we have been unkind or selfish. He will always forgive us when we are sorry, and expects us to forgive each other. Say together:  
'Our Father ...'

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Your word, Lord, is a light for my path, a lamp to guide me closer to you.

#### GOSPEL (*cf Luke 15:11-24*)

One day Jesus told this story. 'There was a man who had two sons and the younger one came to his father and said, 'Father, give me everything that will one day belong to me, so I can enjoy my riches now.'

The father did this, and the younger son set off to look for adventure. He travelled to a distant land and spent all his money enjoying himself.

There was a famine in that land, and the young man found himself penniless and hungry. 'If I stay here I will surely starve,' he thought, so he decided to return to his father and ask for his forgiveness. The father saw his son coming and ran to welcome him. As he hugged him, the young man said, 'Father I am *so* sorry. I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father told his servants to prepare a feast and to bring the finest clothes, and they began to celebrate.'

#### DISCUSSION

Why did the son decide to leave home? – He wanted to enjoy himself and to see the world while he was young.

How do you think his father felt? – His father was probably very sad. He loved his son and wanted to make him happy, so he was ready to give him what he asked for and to watch him leave.

Do you think the son was selfish? – The young man thought only of his own needs and happiness. He did not worry about the unhappiness he would cause.

Why did the young man decide to return home? – When he was starving, he realised that he would always be welcomed and cared for at home. When we are having a bad time, we know that we can turn to our families at home for help and support because they love and care for us.

The father saw his son coming in the distance and ran to greet him. What does this tell us about him? – The father was looking out for his son and hoping that one day he would return. He never stopped loving him and ran to welcome him and show how pleased he was to have him home again.

What did the son say to his father? – The son asked his father to forgive him for being foolish and selfish. The father forgave him at once and celebrated his return.

Why did Jesus tell this story? – Jesus wanted us to understand that whatever we do wrong, we can always come back to our heavenly Father to ask for his forgiveness and know that he will welcome us with open arms. God feels sad and waits patiently for our return when we turn away from him.

When do we come to God and ask for his forgiveness in a special way? – In the sacrament of Reconciliation we come to make our peace with God. We ask for God's forgiveness and his help to become more loving and caring people. Like the son who returned to his father, we are filled with happiness and joy when we make peace with God our Father.

#### ACTIVITY

Photocopy the pictures telling the story of 'The son who came back' and help the children to make and colour their mini books.

#### CREED

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, you gave your love and peace to us. Help us to make our world a happier place by sharing that love and peace with each other.