

Cycle C

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Lectionary #33

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

In some ways, this text from Joshua resembles the Gospel story of the prodigal son. Both narratives proclaim the faithfulness of God who waits, extending **mercy** and love for those who wish to return home. In this text, it is the nation of Israel that returns to God. God's **mercy** is always available and this is a powerful theme that resonates with us as we celebrate this jubilee year of **Mercy**. This is Laetare Sunday, the joyful Sunday of the Lenten season, and indeed God's **mercy** and unconditional love is something to be joyful about.

Reading 2: 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21

The **mercy** of God is expressed in Saint Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians as he proclaims that we are *new creations*. God has fashioned us, through the actions of Christ, to be reconciled and to be recipients of his divine **mercy**. We are called to reflect God's **mercy** in the midst of the world that we live in.

There was discord among the community at Corinth, which called for forgiveness and **mercy** among the people. Saint Paul speaks of the generous and forgiving nature of God, saying that if God has been **merciful** to us, then we should be **merciful** to one another.

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

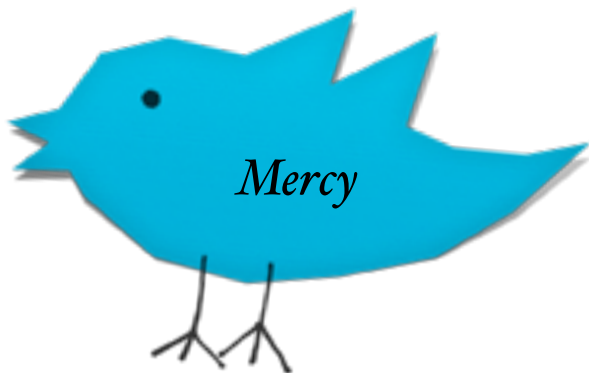
This is probably one of the best known stories of forgiveness and **mercy** in all of the Holy Scriptures. Although the story is often referred to as the prodigal son, it speaks more about the prodigal father who lavishly pours out **mercy** and unconditional love upon a son who was lost and has returned. This is clearly one of the Christian truths that there is no one who does not need to rely on God's **mercy**. If we take a closer look at both brothers, they have both moved away from their father in different ways, and the father extends the same **mercy** to each of his sons. The **mercy** of God cannot be exhausted, and we can always rely on the unbounded love that God has for us. It is the **mercy** of God that assists us in finding our way home.



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



lent



lectionary
reading



children's
story

MISTER BUD

WEARS
THE CONE



CARTER GOODRICH

Mister Bud Wears the Cone

Written by Carter Goodrich

Illustrated by Carter Goodrich

Publication: 2014, Simon & Schuster

Books for Young Readers

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character
education
activity

**A little bit of mercy makes the
world less cold and more just.**
-Pope Francis

Mister Bud Wears the Cone

Mister Bud and Zorro are two dogs that live in the same house and are good buddies, for the most part. In this adventure, Mister Bud has to wear the dreaded cone to keep him from scratching a hot spot on his back. The cone blocks his view and makes it difficult for him to do anything. Zorro, a precocious little pug, decides that this is the perfect opportunity to test Mister Bud's patience, and proceeds to try to get Mister Bud in all kinds of trouble. However, Mister Bud is **merciful** and loving even with all the things that Zorro does, showing how, even though relationships are not without problems, there is always room for **mercy**.

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Step One: Present the students with two lists of the Works of **Mercy**: The Corporal and the Spiritual.

The Corporal Works of Mercy:

1. To feed the hungry
2. To give drink to the thirsty
3. To clothe the naked
4. To give shelter to those with no home
5. To visit the sick
6. To ransom the captive
7. To bury the dead

The Spiritual Works of Mercy:

1. To instruct the ignorant
2. To counsel the doubtful
3. To admonish the sinners
4. To bear wrongs patiently
5. To forgive willingly
6. To comfort the afflicted
7. To pray for the living and the dead

Step Two: Divide the students into groups and give them art supplies and the instructions to create branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits that will make up a **Mercy Tree** for the classroom wall. The trunk of the tree will be God-the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and all the branches will be branches of mercy grow out of the trunk.

Step Three: Have the students think about the different Corporal and Spiritual works of **mercy** that they can do. Have them write these works on the leaves and attach the leaves to the branches.

**It is mercy, not justice
or courage or even
heroism, that alone can
defeat evil!
-Peter Kreeft**



case study

**Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.**

What could you do today?

Think about an event in your life when you have been **merciful** towards someone or when someone has been **merciful** towards you. Recall what you felt in each situation. Invite your family to learn about the various works of **mercy** and ask them if there is a way that the family might work together to dedicate themselves to performing one or more of the works of **mercy** at various times throughout the year.

Look Feel Know Act

Beginning on December 8, 2015, during the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, declared a Jubilee Year of **Mercy**. Interview people who you admire and ask them if this declaration has had any effect on them and if they have seen where **mercy** has played a role in their lives. Find out if your parish or school is doing something to celebrate the Jubilee of **Mercy** and ask yourself if there is a way that you can get involved in that effort. **Mercy** is a key part of living as God would want us to live. As you come to learn about **mercy**, dedicate yourself to being a person of **mercy** and use the Corporal and Spiritual Works of **Mercy** as a guideline. You may wish to make a copy of the works of **mercy** and place them somewhere you will see them daily, such as on your bedroom door or on the bathroom mirror.

Mercy is certainly evident in all of the Holy Scriptures, but is the theme of the readings selected for this Fourth Sunday of Lent. God extends forgiveness and **mercy** to us time and time again, and we are called to do the same. **Mercy** is especially sacred when we have been hurt by someone and feel like retaliating. However, as images of God, we are called to respond as best as we can and in the way that God would. In the story of Mister Bud and Zorro, we see that Mister Bud could have easily reacted in anger to the way Zorro treated him. However, he chose, to Zorro's surprise, to respond with **mercy** and kindness. Similar to this story, God is always seeking to surprise us by extending **mercy** even in times when we feel we may be undeserving of such kindness.



closing tool

Lord God, I give you praise and honor this day and each day of my life. May I give honor to your name by living out the virtue of mercy. Help me, Lord, to fulfill the works of mercy with each and every passing day, and so come to reflect you more fully in my life. Amen.



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