

## 24th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, CYCLE C

*Exodus 32: 7-11, 13-14 + Psalm 51 + 1 Timothy 1: 12-17 + Luke 15: 1-32*

Holy Spirit Catholic Church: September 15, 2019

The Son of God comes into the world, becoming flesh of our flesh, in order to show us who God is and what God cares about. God's Son seeks out & finds those who are lost & brings them home to His Father. By how he lives, Jesus teaches us about God's longing for us, God's great desire for us. By what he teaches, Jesus reveals the inner life of God, the very nature of God.

The nature of God is to find those who are lost, and these 3 famous *"Lost and Found"* parables in Luke's Gospel reveal this passion. Throughout Luke's Gospel, we see Jesus putting these parables into practice. On his last stop on this long journey to Jerusalem, Jesus encounters "lost" Zaccheus in Jericho and clearly states his mission: *"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."* Leaving Jericho, he will then arrive in Jerusalem, where on the cross, Jesus will reveal to what extremes God will go to save what was lost.

It is somehow ingrained in human nature to be lost, or at the very least, to feel lost. Perhaps this is because imprinted in the deepest part of who we are is the knowledge that we have come from God, and all our life is spent finding our way back to our eternal home.

In this life-long journey home, we mistakenly think we have to find God, as if God were hiding, but actually the reverse is true, for we are hiding from God. From the very beginning with Adam's choice to try and make himself into God, we human beings have been hiding from God, & God has been tirelessly looking for us. God's question to Adam after his sin, as he hides naked among the trees in the garden, is a question God asks eternally of humankind: *"Where are you?"*

In Jesus Christ, we discover God's passionate desire to find us where we are. In Jesus, our Heavenly Father proclaims: *"Everything I have is yours!"*

Today we come to this holy place to be found by God in Christ Jesus. We come feeling lost for any number of reasons, longing to be found by God's mercy in Christ and to be renewed by His merciful love.

We find our way home to this banquet table of the Eucharist, and eventually to the heavenly banquet, with the help of others. Together we find the way, especially when we are feeling lost and cannot seem to find the way forward.

In the summer of 1992 I went to Italy with some good friends. We started our trip by meeting one of their friends, Sylvia, in a very small town about an hour and an half outside of Venice. We arrived in Sylvia's town and immediately drove to Venice for a day visit. When the day ended, Sylvia took a couple of our group in her car and led the rest of us in our rental car back to her home in the country.

I was a passenger in the rental car, and I remember the terrible sinking feeling, when about 20-30 minutes outside of Venice, those of us in the rental car realized we were not following Sylvia's car, that we had lost her. This was in the days before cell phones, so we had no way to call her. Also, we did not have her home phone number, nor did we remember the name of the little town she lived in. We felt so foolish and so very lost.

We stopped in the first town we came to and tried to communicate with an Italian policeman, but it was impossible. We were lost and did not know how to find the way home. However, as we left that first town, one of my friends saw a landmark that he remembered--- a large round grain silo. "Turn here," he said. Another friend saw a building that jarred her memory—"Turn there," she said. I saw something familiar along that road as well which pointed us to our next turn. As we each remembered this or that landmark, we found our way home that night. Alone, we would have been lost, but together, we were found.

It's one of the best reasons for the existence of the Church---together we journey home.

We "lost ones" are given to one another to help one another remember the way home. We remember the One who is our way home, Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd, as he finds us in our wayward wanderings and carries us on his shoulders.

His life-giving words are a lamp unto our feet, showing us the way forward.  
We remember that He has destroyed death and restored life,  
so in Him and through Him and with Him we find newness of life, even now.

So that found in the eternal embrace of God's love, we are sent forth from this place  
to find others who are lost and bring them home.

This is what disciples of Jesus do—  
we seek out and find the lost.

We invite them to join us in the never-ending party of God's merciful love in Christ.  
We rejoice because we who were "dead" have come back to life again in Him.

*Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi*