

# Formed in Prayer



*Let us be still  
and ask the Holy Spirit to be with us.*

Dear Father,  
Be with us as we pray.  
Open our ears to hear your Word in the Gospel.  
Unite us in faith, hope and love as we pray together.  
Send your Holy Spirit to inspire and sustain us in our mission.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Gospel

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. ‘This man’ they said ‘welcomes sinners and eats with them.’ So he spoke this parable to them:

‘A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, “Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me.” So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

‘When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, “How many of my father’s paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants.” So he left the place and went back to his father.

‘While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.” And they began to celebrate.

‘Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. “Your brother has come” replied the servant “and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound.” He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, “Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening.”

‘The father said, “My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.”’

*What words or phrases struck you in Sunday’s Gospel reading?  
What might God be prompting you to consider or inviting you to do in and through the Gospel?*

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## Reflection

The parable of the Prodigal Son is the climax of Jesus' response in three 'parables of the lost' to the charge of the Pharisees and scribes that he 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' The three parables, which Luke describes as one parable, serve to justify Jesus' scandalous meal ministry to the marginalised as a work of the Father. Jesus' meal ministry can become a powerful image of the hospitality we are called to extend to those most in need of our love and care, of God's merciful love and providence.

School leaders and teachers can come in for the same criticism as Jesus when they focus too much on those deemed by others to be 'lost' or 'dead', those with special needs or who are struggling for all sorts of reasons. Jesus often used images of a feast to describe the kingdom of heaven; often a wedding feast or a feast in which the poor and marginalised would have places of honour.

A spiritual writer once mused, 'Why would you ever want to spend eternity at a feast with people you had spent all your life avoiding?' Who sits at the table of our life? Do they sit at the places of honour or await the crumbs that occasionally fall from our excess? (*Greg Wilson, CSYMA Manager*)

## Prayer

Father,  
May we always strive to be an image of your scandalously generous and merciful love,  
especially to those most in need in our care.  
We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, icon of your compassionate hospitality.  
Amen.