

## **Lenten Reconciliation Service March 18, 2010**

**Readings: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-10**

### **Lost and Found**

Last Sunday we heard the parable of the prodigal son, and this evening we hear two other stories that Jesus told that were omitted from Sunday's reading. We hear about the lost sheep and about the lost coin. We are reminded in all three stories that God continues to love us and search for us even when we are lost. We come here tonight because we admit that, in some way, we are lost and have gone astray. And that admission, along with a desire to avoid getting lost again, pleases God very much. There is great joy in heaven that you are all here tonight.

We hear how the shepherd calls his friends and neighbors and asks them to rejoice with him because he had retrieved his lost sheep. We hear how the woman called her friends and neighbors and asked them to rejoice with her because she had found her lost coin. We heard about the father who slaughtered the fattened calf to celebrate with his friends and neighbors because his lost son was once again home safe. But most importantly we hear Jesus say: ***"In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents."***

Our first reading this evening should also sound familiar. It was one of our readings from last Sunday. In it, St. Paul says: ***"Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation."*** Through Baptism we became new creations, children of God. We come here tonight during this fourth week of Lent to celebrate the Church's sacrament of Penance, the Church's ministry of reconciliation.

We come because we desire to restore our relationship with God, but it is also a good time to focus on restoring our relationships with our neighbors. Tonight we ask for God's forgiveness and mercy, and when we leave we need to extend forgiveness and mercy to those who have offended us. We do this because we pray: ***"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."*** And because Jesus says: ***"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."***

Even though God continues to love us when we are sinners, and He forgives and forgets when we repent of our sins and ask forgiveness in Confession, our sins have consequences; they cause damage to the Body of Christ. And that is why we have to continually work toward reconciliation; trying to undo, in some way, the damage our sins have caused. We can achieve this reconciliation through our Lenten practices. We can pray. We can make sacrifices, such as fasting, to demonstrate our true remorse. But, with regard to reconciliation, the most effective of our three Lenten practices is almsgiving, performing works of charity, works of love. When we develop and demonstrate our ability to love God by loving our neighbor, this love brings true healing and reconciliation to the Body of Christ.

You have come here this evening to reconcile with God, and there is great joy in heaven. Tomorrow work to reconcile yourself with family members and neighbors and coworkers. And the joy in heaven will be even greater.

**Deacon Joe Hulway**