



March 31, 2019  
The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

You can read these weekly newsletters on St. Thomas' website! [www.stthomasbath.org](http://www.stthomasbath.org) Click on Godly Play and under "What's New?" click on the Godly Play newsletter.

### **NOTES FROM FATHER MICHAEL**

I want to apologize for the very sporadic Sunday School Sundays since Christmas. Several things have conspired to make this happen, but I am hoping for a more consistent springtime.

Second of all, let us keep in our prayers David Prusha and his family, his wife BobbiJo and daughter Chloe. Dave has begun a long recovery period.

Third, we welcome our new Pastoral Leader, The Rev. Dr. Melanie Duguid-May. Dr. May is a transitional deacon, meaning she is looking forward to ordination as a priest in late summer or early fall. I will be looking for ways for our kids to get to know her.

### **TAKING GODLY PLAY HOME**

This Sunday we worked with the Parable of the Prodigal Son. It was unusual in that it was also the Gospel for the Day in church.

The Prodigal Son may also be called The Parable of the Loving Father, in that it is

really the action of the father upon which the story turns.

How to talk about this parable with children? The concept of "inheritance" may be a difficult one for children to grasp, but one way of talking about the younger son is say that he set out on his own. In Jesus' day, sons were expected to continue the family business (in this case, farming), but the younger son in the parable thought he could make it on his own.

He tried, but found out he couldn't. His life got so bad that he remembered that the servants who worked on his family farm were better off than he was on his own. So he decided to go home and plead to be accepted as a servant.

But the father was waiting for him, saw him coming, and ran to greet him. The son didn't even get to ask to be a servant. The father welcomed him home as his son with great feasting.

The parable could stop there with a great message: God is always waiting for us to return if we stray and is ready not with punishment, but with forgiveness.

The parable does have one more scene, however. The older brother who has remained on the farm hears of the younger brother's return and his father's extravagant welcome. He is bitter and resentful. He has the one who has kept doing the right thing. Where is his feast?

The father says, look, you are my son and everything I have is yours, but we have to celebrate the homecoming of your brother. Jesus doesn't tell us whether or not the older son accepts this explanation and goes to the party. We are left to decide that for ourselves.

One of the great things about this parable is that you can imagine yourself as any of the characters, and there are points in our life when we are each one of them.

The questions are: Will we come home to God when we squander his love? Can we forgive as the father forgives? Can we rejoice in God's forgiveness of another, even if it seems to easy?

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Sunday School Schedule

- Sunday School will be held next Sunday, **April 7**, and Palm Sunday, **April 14**, although on Palm Sunday we will begin by joining in the distribution of palms upstairs.
- **Easter Day, April 21**, there will be no Sunday School, but there will be children's time during the 11 am Service and the Easter Egg Hunt afterwards.
- Sunday School will pick up again after Easter, **April 28**, and run through

Pentecost Sunday, **June 9**. I will need a substitute on April 28, and possibly May 26. Let me know if you can help.

### Mass on the Grass

A date has not yet been chosen for this annual event, when we celebrate the Eucharist outside and do some outdoor games afterwards and have a cookout.

### Baptism

The next date for Holy Baptism is the Day of Pentecost, June 9. Let Dr. Duguid-May know if you have a candidate for baptism.

## WAYS YOU CAN HELP

1. I am still hoping to do Godly Play training for anyone who'd like to give it a try. Talk to me!
2. If you can help with the Easter Egg Hunt, please let me know.
3. After Sunday School ends, I'd love to do a family event that can bring us all together to have some fun. Any ideas? Go to the Zoo? Somewhere else that's fun for kids?

*Have a blessed week!*

*Michael*