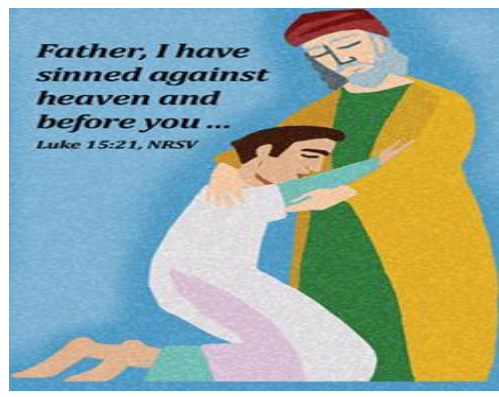


## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent



Homecoming can be such a warm experience. Yet, we resist the home comer if they have hurt us. Today's readings suggest that to be a Christian is to join in the parade of well-wishers.

The first reading gives a beautiful picture of the arrival in the Promised Land. It was a homecoming. To share in the food of the land was to receive God's welcome to their new surroundings; despite their record of sin in the desert. Another sign of the new start was that the manna, the desert food, ceased at this precise time.

In the second reading, Paul says the Christian is a new creation worthy of respect and love. All barriers are removed that keep us apart from God and our fellow humans. To reconcile means to make otherwise, to remove all barriers that keep us apart. We are called to discount transgressions and open up the avenues of reunion; as God (in Christ) has done for us.

In the Gospel, Jesus addresses communities that insist on strict entrance requirements for sinners. He notes that some in his audience were scandalized by his choice of partygoers (sinners and tax collectors). One should not place limits on God's capacity to forgive. The parable questions whether the hearers will be like the forgiving father or the pouting elder son.