

GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD

PRAYER SERVICE for HOLY WEEK

LEADER: In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LEADER: This simple, beautiful prayer gives honor and glory to the majesty of the Blessed Trinity.

READER 1: God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end. He wanted to share his love with us. He treats us with tender, loving care because we are his children. How can we thank God for this blessing?

ALL: To love God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself, is worth more than any sacrifice.

LEADER: God sent us his son, Jesus Christ, as our guide to heaven. With Joseph's help, Mary fulfilled Scripture's prophecies until Jesus' ministry began. Jesus was the Master Teacher and taught us how to pray to his Father. Together, we pray:

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen

READER 2: As the Master Teacher, Jesus used parables and miracles to explain how to love God, ourselves, and others. The Prodigal Son broke many rules, wasted his inheritance, and led a life of sin. Yet his father forgave him with open arms when he returned. May we soften our hearts to forgive those who have trespassed against us.

LEADER: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke.

A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them.

READER 1: After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need.

READER 2: So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, "How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.'"

LEADER: So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son."

READER 1: But his father ordered his servants, "Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found." Then the celebration began.

READER 2: Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, "Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound."

LEADER: He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, "Look, all these

years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.”

READER 1: He said to him, “My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.”

LEADER: With the beginning of Holy Week, Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey, while people praised him and lined the way with palm fronds. Jesus celebrated the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, and prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before being arrested, scourged at the pillar, and crucified on the cross of Calvary. He endured every humiliation and could only say from the cross to the heavens,

ALL: “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

LEADER: Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus, which he placed in a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. On the first day of the week at early dawn the women went to the tomb with spices to perfume the body. Yet, when they found the tomb empty, they remembered how Jesus told them that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified and on the third day rise. (Luke 24:6-7)

ALL: God so loved the world that he allowed his Son, Jesus Christ, to be offered up on the cross and defeat death for us.

LEADER: In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.