

Preparing for the Third Spiritual Conversation

In this Spiritual Conversation a facilitator will guide a small group in a discussion focusing on this question: *Where have you experienced God's invitation to reconciliation in the Church or in your ministry? Is there anything holding you back from fuller participation in parish life?*

Please take 30-60 minutes to pray in preparation for that conversation. We recommend using this image or this Scripture passage to guide your prayer. Prayer is a lot like breathing: Everyone can do it! Sometimes it is very natural and easy, and other times there are some steps we can take to help clear things up. You might find these steps helpful:

- 1) Choose where, when and for how long you will pray. Try to stick to your decision.
- 2) Prepare your heart for prayer and invite God to be with you. Have in your heart this question: *God, where have I experienced you inviting me to reconciliation with you and with others in your Church or in ministry? Please show me what might be holding me back from fuller participation in parish life.*
- 3) Read the passage expecting that God has something to say to you in the Scriptures. Reread it slowly—I reread it out loud a couple of times. Maybe use your imagination to think what it might have been like to be there; what are the sights and sounds?
- 4) Have a conversation with God, telling Him what's on your heart and listening to Him.
- 5) Write down the strongest thoughts or feelings that came to you.
- 6) At the end of the prayer time, thank God for the time He spent with you.

Prayer in preparation for the Third Spiritual Conversation

God Invites Us into Reconciliation



A younger son went far away from his Father, whose heart he had hurt, and felt the lonely bitterness that comes from broken relationships. But his Father's love was never far from him. When he finally returns home, his Father welcomes him in a huge embrace and they are reconciled: As we see in this image, their eyelashes touch and they come to share a single vision. The older brother does not understand this love, refusing to participate in the feast, but the Father tells him: Reconciliation is such a great joy; how could it not bring together the children of one Father, in love?

Luke 15:11-32: The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Jesus told them yet another story:

Once a man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons. Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat. He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing. Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'"

The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him. The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son." But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been

found." And they began to celebrate.

The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?" The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf." The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."