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**From the Selected Works of Reverend Lawrence E. Frizzell, S.T.L., S.S.L., D.Phil.**

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## A Moment to Pause and Recall Our Baptism

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**A Moment to Pause and Recall Our Baptism**

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## **Fourth Sunday of Lent**

Sunday Readings for March 14, 2010 for Cycle C:  
Jos 5:9-12, Ps 34, 2 Cor 5:17-21, Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

### **A MOMENT TO PAUSE AND RECALL OUR BAPTISM**

*Lawrence E. Frizzell*

During the season of Lent we recall the important truth that "the salvation of the Church is mystically prefigured in the exodus of God's chosen people from the land of bondage" (Vatican Council II, *Declaration of the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions* #4). The reading from St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians for the third Sunday of Lent interprets for Christians the crossing of the sea and desert wandering after Israel's departure from Egypt. Our life of faith and the season of Lent itself are pilgrimages toward perfect union with God. Just as the Israelites passed through the sea, so Christians are baptized or plunged into liberating waters. Just as God sustained Israel with food and drink for their journey, so Christians are nourished through the sacraments as gifts of Christ and his Spirit.

The immediate preparation for entry into the promised land is proclaimed from the Book of Joshua so that we will become more alert to our proximity to Holy Week and Easter. Except for Joshua and Caleb, the generation that departed from Egypt died in the wilderness. Joshua circumcised all the men born in the desert as a sign that, having crossed the Jordan River dry-shod, they were making a new beginning. Then they celebrated the Passover Meal and ate the produce of the land.

How often do I recall my baptism? Every time we use holy water we should renew our commitment in faith and love. How carefully do I prepare for the Eucharistic banquet? These are the sacred signs of our incorporation into Christ and into God's people. As Holy Week approaches we should reflect on our personal journey of faith. The "parable of the prodigal son" is a superb example of the need to make a fresh start in our relationship with God and neighbor.

The parable is a familiar one. Many parents give in to a child's wishes, considering that to acquiesce is a sign of love. At times the burdens of immaturity weigh heavily on the person who dissipates his time and talents. At last the young man takes the first step toward conversion. A prayer of repentance is rehearsed but the father's forgiveness anticipates it. The man celebrates his errant son's return with a banquet. Do I recognize myself as prodigal?

The older brother is insulted by his father's forgiveness and joy. Is he jealous that the younger man was the recipient of unmerited love? The father explains that being faithful and remaining in the bosom of the family, the older brother has untold benefits. Do I recognize myself as self-righteously proud of my efforts to remain "on the straight and narrow?" Do I compare myself with others and feel that my virtues are unlauded, my work unappreciated?

The parable has a message for all, but the great point on which Jesus wants us to focus is the mercy of God toward the sinner who humbly acknowledges the need for divine help in order to rebuild a decent life. The movement from spiritual death to a renewed -- and treasured -- life in communion

with God should evoke a celebration in the community. None of us knows whether some day he or she may be like the prodigal. May we appreciate our Lenten journey as we turn to the heavenly Father through union with his Son's passing from death to life!