



YEAR OF FAITH 2012-2013

# THE WEAVINGS

Catholic Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle Department for Spirituality

March 2013

## A Universal Call to Holiness (2)

Last month, we looked at how Lent offers us a time to reflect on the “universal call to holiness” highlighted in the Vatican II document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*.

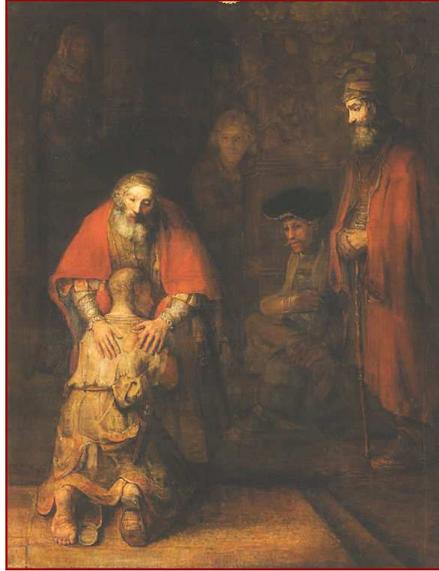
This month, we will look at the Gospels for the coming Sundays and Holy Week to develop this idea further.

On 3 March, the Third Sunday of Lent, we have the parable of the **Unfruitful Fig Tree**. At one level, we might think that trees are not particularly called to holiness but the psalms and Isaiah do speak of the trees singing for joy (*Ps96*) and clapping their hands (*Is 55*) at the presence of the Lord! More practically, though, it can be a parable about ourselves and the sorts of thing we might need to help us to grow in holiness and to be fruitful in our Christian lives. For example—what things might need to be pruned from my life to make me grow more vigorously? What spiritual food do I need to help me to make that growth?

On 10 March, we have the parable of the **Prodigal Son**. At first, we might think of the younger son being the one called to holiness... to know remorse and to turn back to his father's house seeking forgiveness. But it also applies to that father—what kind of father is he going to be? One who judges and condemns his son—or to be like the God who is full of tenderness and compassion? Which path will lead him to holiness? And the older son who also has a choice—to stay in his place of anger and bitterness or to move towards a holier and healthier place (however hard that might be to do). As you read or listen to the Gospel, reflect on the different characters—and how you might be like each of them—and what they teach you about your own call to holiness.

The following Sunday, 17 March, there is the account of the **woman taken in adultery** and her accusers. Again, the obvious call is to the woman. She has been caught committing a grave sin—literally, a mortal sin as it could cost her her life. And yet, Jesus invites her to make a spiritual journey—not condemning her but saving her and calling her to a new and holy life. As he says elsewhere, having been forgiven much, she will be capable of loving much. But the invitation is also to the accusers. At first, they would probably have described themselves as holy and upright and therefore in a position to judge. Jesus reflects back to them that no one is without sin—that it can be dangerous to judge. In some ways, theirs is a harder journey than the woman's—but Jesus calls them to a different kind of holiness, one tempered with awareness of their own

sinfulness. Again, use the characters to help you to reflect on your own faith journey and call to holiness.



On Palm Sunday, we have the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. We have Jesus' example of humility contrasting with the excitement of the crowds. They seem to be looking for a short-cut to glory with the coming of the Messiah—whereas Jesus knows that this path often leads through darker places and calls upon deeper resources... as we hear later in Luke's account of the Passion. Reflect on the very human tendency to want to short cut the work of becoming holy. We are given a life-time because that is how long it takes! How might you prepare to live Holy Week to its fullest and deepest to help you grow in the gift of holiness? 

**April issue of Weavings out: WEDNESDAY 27 MARCH**  
With further reflections for the Easter Triduum  
and into Easter time

### Lent 2013

The resources for Lent include an outline for a session based on the parable of the Prodigal Son with prayer stations linked to the Gospels for the remaining weeks of Lent. They are available from the diocesan website or from Diane Murray: [spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk)

### Diocesan Festival 2013

29-30 June 2013. Venue: Youth Village.  
Booking forms, posters, etc in parishes week beginning 11 March! More information from Diane, contact details below.



Interested in supporting the faith life of young people? Go along to **CYMFed at the Sage—16 March 2013**, 10.30-3.30pm.

Booking forms available from [www.cymfed.org.uk](http://www.cymfed.org.uk) or from YMT.

### Contact Details

To sign up for **Weavings** or the daily e-mail, contact Kathryn Turner, Head of the Department for Spirituality via the Department for Education  
St Vincent's Offices, St Cuthbert's House, West Road,  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne. NE15 7PY

**0191 243 3313**

or

**0191 534 4212**

**E-mail: [spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk)**

## Pope Benedict—A Hidden House of Prayer at the Heart of the Church

Shortly after he announced his retirement, Pope Benedict spoke to a group of priests—and to the Church – reminding them that "even if I am withdrawing into prayer, I will always be close to all of you...even if I remain hidden to the world," (14 February)

This is a beautiful way of affirming the power of contemplative prayer—at one level, it is indeed hidden from the world but, on another, it is at its very heart.

It is worth remembering that the man from whom Benedict took his name created a way of life that centred on prayer, largely hidden in monasteries and convents. Over the centuries, it has attracted hundreds of thousands of people and, in dark and violent times, these houses of prayer offered a light to the world.

We have spoken in **Weavings** of the ministry of "Hidden Houses of Prayer". It is a ministry that is particularly suited to



people who are no longer able to be as active in serving the Church and the world as they once were—rather like Pope Benedict. It can also suit others who feel called to make their home a kind of

sanctuary where they hold the needs of the world and its people in their prayer. Some, for example, might find they wake in the night and feel drawn to pray in the quiet hours for something that they read or heard about. Others might have a small prayer space where they sit and do spiritual reading or quiet meditation.

As Benedict embarks on the "last stage of his pilgrimage on this earth", we pray for him—and, perhaps, consider ways in which we could join in his hidden ministry of prayer.

We need also to pray for the cardinals charged with electing his successor—and, of course, that successor himself. There are resources available for personal prayer and also for group prayers (e.g Holy Hours) from the Bishops' Conference website: <http://catholicchurch.org.uk>

### Lay Carmelites—a contemplative life lived "in the world"

Last month, I was able to attend a meeting of Lay Carmelites in Bedlington and would welcome enquirers.

There is also an opportunity to spend a weekend sharing Carmelite spirituality at Minsteracres, 21-23 June.

For more information, contact Teresa Kelly: 01670 737563, e-mail: [teresakelly69@gmail.com](mailto:teresakelly69@gmail.com) or visit [northumberlandcarmelites.webs.com](http://northumberlandcarmelites.webs.com)

The Lay Carmelites meet on the third Sunday of every month at St Bede's,

### Mini-Pilgrimages

**23 March, Waterhouses and Durham**  
in honour of **St John Boste**

**6 April at Hexham**

in honour of **St Wilfrid and St Oswald**

### Rehallowing the Land...

Praying with the Northern Saints

**6 March—St Joseph's Gateshead**

**13 March—Ushaw Moor Catholic Club,  
Ushaw Moor**

## Prayer Station of the Month

This month, you might like to use the picture of the Prodigal Son by Rembrandt as a prayer station.

It is an image that has spoken to countless people and inspired Henri Nouwen to write a book based on his experience of gazing at it and letting it speak to his soul.

You might want to buy copies of the picture or print them off for yourself. You can find a version on Wikipedia that is in the public domain. Print onto card (less likely to curl at the edges) - or, if you use paper, laminate it. This has the added advantage of protecting the picture but also brings out the colours.

It can be worth making several sizes . An A4 one allows people to see

Take one of the copies of the Rembrandt's painting  
The Return of the Prodigal Son.



Spend some time simply gazing at it.

Take each character in turn.

Look at what they are wearing...  
what their expression or body language says...

Try to imagine what they are thinking...

How does the picture help you  
to go deeper into Jesus' parable?

details that they might miss on a smaller one—for example, the shadowy figure on the top left (invisible on the picture alongside but a little clearer on the version on the front). It might be worth asking people to leave these behind as they are more expensive to produce.

Smaller versions—A5 (2 per A4 sheet) or A6 (4 per sheet) or even six per sheet—could be produced for people to take away and pray with at home. You could include the words from the prayer station on the back to help people to continue their reflections.

Alternatively, include the Jesus Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*

