

## Teaching Reconciliation

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is central to the life of every local Catholic community, especially at times like Lent and Advent.
- When teaching or preaching about this Sacrament, we usually focus on the cluster of parables found in Luke 15: the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, the Lost (Prodigal) Son.
- How can we breathe fresh life into these teachings to prevent over-familiarity for both teachers and listeners? Sometimes one good, fresh insight can make all the difference. This series of Reconciliation handouts offers just that: brief, accessible and engaging teaching and discussion points.
- Authored by Teresa Pirola and Jack Driscoll CFC, drawing largely on the work of Kenneth Bailey. Illustrations: Francine Pirola. © The Story Source 2008.
- Kenneth Bailey has spent forty years living and teaching New Testament in the Middle East, close to the land, the languages and the people. His work offers important insights into Middle Eastern village life from which we can extrapolate to form a view of conditions at the time of Jesus. See Kenneth Bailey, *The Cross and the Prodigal: Luke 15 Through the Eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants*. Rev. ed. (Illinois: IVP Books, 2005).



# Reconciliation

Read Luke 15:1-7  
Parable of the Lost Sheep

### Let us focus now on verses 6-7:

*And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (NRSV)*

### Picture this:

- Jesus' narrative highlights the behavior of the shepherd and, in so doing, challenges the 'righteous.' The sheep is not blamed, nor the work of searching delegated. The shepherd accepts responsibility for the loss; personally searches for the one; immediately initiates restoration; rejoices with all over the saving of the one.
- Remember why Jesus is telling this parable in the first place (vv.1-2): the Pharisees and scribes complain that Jesus welcomes sinners.

### Imagine this:

- The irony and confrontation of the scene. Who are the *righteous* (v.7) 'who need no repentance'? The Pharisees and scribes to whom the parable is directed? Imagine the look on their faces, the rumblings amongst them...

### Hear this:

*Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! ...you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost. (Ezek: 34:2,4. NRSV)*

### Ponder this:

- Reconciliation doesn't happen all at once; it is a process. Do I personally contribute to that process? How? Do I rejoice or stand in judgment when a person 'lost' is brought one step closer to the community?
- The gathering of the 'lost' is a sign of salvation (Ezek:34). What signs of salvation can we identify in our community?

