

# **St. Rafka Maronite Catholic Church**

2301 Wadsworth Boulevard,  
Lakewood, CO 80214  
Website: [www.strafkadenver.org](http://www.strafkadenver.org)  
Email: [StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com](mailto:StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com)



## **March 3, 2024 Parable of the Prodigal Son**

### **Schedule of Masses & Services**

**Sunday Mass** 11:00 AM  
**Tuesday-Thursday Mass** 6:00 PM  
**Friday Mass during Lent** 5:50 PM followed by  
Stations of the Cross  
**Saturday Mass** 11:30 AM  
**Holy Days on Weekdays** 6:30 PM  
  
**Confession:** Tuesday-Thursday 5:00 – 5:45 PM

**Please call the office to alert us of any  
Pastoral Care needs**  
(Hospital, Homebound, Etc.)

### **Office Hours**

9:30 am-3:30 pm, Wednesday & Friday  
720-833-0354

[StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com](mailto:StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com)

*Rev. El-Badaoui Habib, Parochial Administrator*

*Linda Craven, Office & Business Manager*

*Philip Kyburz, Grand Knight,  
St. Rafka Council of the Knights of Columbus*

*Linda Craven, Religious Education*  
[lhalpincraven@gmail.com](mailto:lhalpincraven@gmail.com)

Contact the office to register in the Parish

## **Spiritual Message from Deacon George**

### **PRODIGAL SON—GOD’S PROMISE**

Prodigal Son—A Reality for Many Christian Parents

The Prodigal Son is a reality for many of us. In the journey of life, we soon realize there are no guarantees as Christian parents. No matter how hard we strive to teach our children about God and His Word, and no matter how often we pray for our children to discover Jesus Christ and His message of salvation, some decide to reject it all! Even in those families where God is loved, trusted, and glorified, children sometimes rebel and run from their roots!

Prodigal Son—A Story from the Old Testament

The story of the Prodigal Son has been around for thousands of years. In 2 Kings 18:5, we learn that Hezekiah trusted the Lord more than any other king of Judah. As such, it’s logical to assume that his son, Manasseh was brought up to love and trust the Lord. However, when Manasseh became king at the age of twelve, he immediately turned against God and “did evil in the sight of the Lord” (2 Chronicles 33:2). Manasseh was truly wicked, committing all sorts of idolatry, sorcery, and immorality, including the sacrifice of his own sons to pagan gods. Later, after Manasseh and the people of Judah had been taken in chains to

## DAILY READINGS

**Sunday, March 3**

***Parable of the Prodigal Son***

*Book of Offering Page 217*

Zec 3:1-7

2 Cor 13:5-13

Lk 15:11-32

**Monday, March 4**

***St. Paul and His Sister, Juliana***

*Book of Offering Page 227*

2 Cor 9:1a, 5-15

Lk 9:37-45

**Tuesday, March 5**

***St. Albert the Great, Doctor of the Church***

*Book of Offering Page 227*

1 Cor 16:15-24

Mk 8:22-26

**Wednesday, March 6**

***St. Conan of Isauria, M***

*Book of Offering Page 227*

Rom 14:1-13

Lk 7:1-10

**Thursday, March 7**

***The 7 Young Men of Ephesus, M***

*Book of Offering Page 227*

2 Cor 1:23-2:5

Mt 15:29-39

**Friday, March 8**

***St. Frances of Rome***

*Book of Offering Page 227*

2 Cor 12:21-13:5

Mt 9:27-35

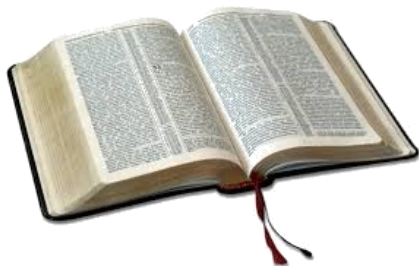
**Saturday, March 9**

***The Forty Martyrs***

*Book of Offering Page 227*

2 Cor 4:11-18; Lk 6:20-23 or

2 Tm 4:9-19; Mk 3:1-12



## Today's Gospel

### The Prodigal Son & His Brother (Luke 15: 11-32)

<sup>11</sup> Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup> When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" <sup>20</sup> So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup> He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' <sup>31</sup> Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

### Spiritual Message (continued)

Babylon, he finally turned back to the one true God that his father had taught him about. God heard Manasseh's cry and brought him back to Jerusalem. After years of rebellion, God was still loving and merciful to Manasseh when he finally recognized that God alone was Lord.

Prodigal Son—A Story from the New Testament

The Parable of the Prodigal Son in the Gospel of Luke is familiar to most of us. It's the story of a rebellious son who rejects his father's upbringing. Proud and strong, the son heads-off to a far-away land, leads a wild life of adventure, and squanders everything of value (literally and symbolically). Not until he's confronted with failure and despair, does he return home, repentant, and willing to do anything to win back his father's favor. To his surprise, and the surprise of others, he's welcomed without question into his father's loving and forgiving arms. No amount of time, no amount of money, and no amount of rebellion could get in the way of the father's patience and unconditional love for his son. "For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24).

# NEWS & EVENTS

## *This week at St. Rafka Church*

Sun 3	Mon 4	Tues 5	Wed 6	Thurs 7	Fri 8	Sat 9	Sun 10
<b>Parable of the Prodigal Son</b>  <b>11:00am</b>  <b>RE Classes 10—10:50</b>  <b>Mass in Co. Springs 5 pm</b>	<i>No Mass</i>  <i>St. Paul and His Sister, Juliana</i>	<i>Mass 6 pm</i>  <i>St. Albert the Great, Doctor of the Church</i>	<i>Mass 6 pm</i>  <i>St. Conan of Isauria, M</i>	<i>Mass 6 pm</i>  <i>The 7 Young Men of Ephesus, M</i>	<i>Mass 5:50 pm</i> <i>Stations of the Cross 6:30 pm</i>  <i>St. Frances of Rome</i>	<i>Mass 11:30 am</i>  <i>The 40 Martyrs</i>	<b>Healing of the Paralytic</b>  <b>11:00am</b>  <b>RE Classes 10—10:50</b>
<p>The deadline to receive events and articles for the bulletin is Wednesday at 12:00 PM            Submit them to the Parish Office at <a href="mailto:StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com">StRafkaLkwd@outlook.com</a></p>							

Maronite Divine Liturgy will be celebrated by Abouna Habib at 5pm on Sunday March 3rd at St Joseph's Catholic Church. The Divine Liturgy in the Maronite tradition is celebrated in Colorado Springs every FIRST Sunday of the month, with rare needs to change. Please read emails to stay informed of these changes. Please pass the information on.

St Joseph's 1830 S Corona St., Colorado Springs, CO 80905. Parking lot is on the Wahsatch St. side.

Donations for St Rafka Maronite Catholic Church are accepted in the basket at the rear of the church on Mass Sundays, or you may make an electronic donation through Zelle to (724) 912-8840. Please notate if donation is for a Mass Intention in memory of a loved one.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Words cannot express how thankful I am for your ongoing support for our beloved Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, especially amidst the challenges at home and abroad.

Lent is an ideal time to deepen our faith through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. It is a time to recall the great blessings God has given us, and to give back to those in need. I return to you this Lent seeking your support for our most critical needs including:

- Seminarians' Education and Formation
- Support to Missions and Parishes in Need
- Growing Ministries with our Children, Youth, and Young Adults.
- Charitable Aid to our Brothers and Sisters at home in the USA, or in Lebanon, Syria, and the Middle East

**Checks may be mailed to:**

Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles  
 19300 Rinaldi Street Box 8509  
 Porter Ranch, CA 91327

Your generous contribution and prayers are greatly appreciated. On behalf of all those who will benefit, I want to personally thank you for your consideration and contribution.

Prayerfully yours in Christ,  
 +A. Elias Zaidan  
 Bishop of the Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles

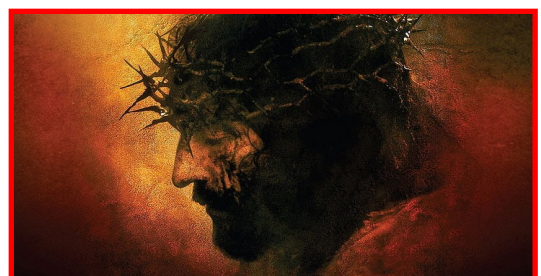
### Bishop Elias' Lenten Appeal

### The Goal for the 2024 Lenten

Appeal is \$4,000.

**If you want your Sunday donation to be specifically for the Appeal, please designate it as such on your check.**

**On Great Friday of the Crucifixion (March 29) we will have the annual collection for the Holy Land.**





## St. Rafka Parish Mission Statement

Faith, hope, and love, reinforcing our family values, promoted through heritage and prayer for the glory of God, the edification of the Holy Church and the salvation of the world.

### Spiritual Message (continued)

Of course, the awesome message of this parable is that God is patient and gracious with all of His children. He is willing to welcome each of us home into His loving and forgiving arms.

The road to God for each Prodigal Son is different. However, as the two stories above tell us, we should never give up—no matter how far away they seem! God gives us these examples in scripture so that we realize that our children may turn against God. He also gives us instruction on how to dig in spiritually for our prodigal children: Be in constant prayer, always lead by example, and follow through with love and grace, no matter how despairing things get. Remember God's promise to those who raise children in a Christian home: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

The parable of the father and his two sons is the longest one in the gospels. What is the main point of the story? Is it the contrast between an obedient and a disobedient son, or is it between the reception given to a spendthrift son by the father and the reception given by the eldest son? Jesus contrasts the father's merciful love with the eldest son's harsh reaction to his errant brother and to the lavish party his joyful father throws for his repentant son.

While the errant son had wasted his father's money, his father, nonetheless, maintained unbroken love for his son. The son, while he was away, learned a lot about himself. He realized that his father had given him love which he had not returned. He had yet to learn about the depth of his father's love for him. His deep humiliation at finding himself obliged to feed on the husks of pigs and his reflection on all he had lost, led to his repentance and decision to declare himself guilty before his father. While he hoped for reconciliation with his father, he could not have imagined a full restoration of the relationship. The father did not need to speak words of forgiveness to his son; his actions spoke more loudly and clearly! The beautiful robe, the ring, and the festive banquet symbolize the new life -- pure, worthy, and joyful -- of anyone who returns to God.

The prodigal could not return to the garden of innocence, but he was welcomed and reinstated as a son. The errant son's dramatic change from grief and guilt to forgiveness and restoration express in picture the language of the resurrection from the dead, a rebirth to new life from spiritual death. The parable also contrasts mercy and its opposite – un-forgiveness. The father who had been wronged, was forgiving. The eldest son, who had not been wronged, was unforgiving. His un-forgiveness turns into contempt and pride. His resentment leads to his isolation and estrangement from the community of forgiven sinners. In this parable, Jesus gives a vivid picture of God and what God is like. God is truly kinder than us. He does not lose hope or give up when we stray. He rejoices in finding the lost and in leading them home.

This well-known parable emphasizes the importance of repentance, the human part is being reconciled with God. He didn't understand his father or his own need. From his change in lifestyle, we see that he didn't like the one at home. He was not honoring his parents. He represents those who make no profession of following God. The attitude of rejecting the loving way of orderly living God sets before us naturally leads to wasting our resources of health, morality, and money. He had been happily self-deceived.

The Spirit calls but it is up to us to respond. Our Father in heaven runs to meet us and covers us with His robe. The son was physically and mentally active, but spiritually dead and thus without hope for eternal life. He was lost, too, but was satisfied with false security. The Pharisees and scribes related personally to this. Selfish interests cut off our connection with the Christ who loves sinners.

He was the son who chose to be a servant while his brother, in sorrow for his sin, had become a son. Finding the lost is the objective of our heavenly Father.