

MERCIFUL LIKE THE FATHER

“Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. He feels responsible; he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path which the merciful love of Christians must travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful to each other.”
Pope Francis

THE PARABLE OF THE MERCIFUL FATHER Luke 15:11-32

(an unlit candle and a Bible open to the parable of the Merciful Father rest on a cloth-covered table.)

OPENING PRAYER

Lord God, you continue to invite us to walk more closely with you and with one another. We ask you to draw us into your embrace; let us taste and see your goodness right where we find ourselves. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen



GOSPEL

(Read by leader of a member of the group)

REFLECTION

(The group pauses or a time of quiet reflection, during which members consider the Reflection and the Questions, but above all the parable itself.)

Our Father is not waiting for us to approach him! He runs out to meet us!
Let us shift our focus from ourselves to the important and lasting and loving embrace of our merciful God!

Our Father comes to embrace each of us right where we are. In his warm embrace is unbounded mercy. This is not about our merit. It is about his generosity. Instead of waiting for us to “Come to our senses” he quickly comes to us.
With mercy, God actively seeks us out!

God draws us into an embrace that restores our dignity as his sons and daughters and as each other’s brothers and sisters. Let us place ourselves in those loving arms. In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, the father is running to us too!

Let his embrace transform us, that we become “Merciful like the Father.”

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- Tell of a time when you have been welcomed back into a relationship that was broken in some way.
- Have you ever had the opportunity to act like the father by showing mercy to another who may not have deserved it? How did you react?
- Who in your circle of family and friends needs welcoming? How might you extend a merciful welcome?
- Tell of an embrace you have experienced as merciful.

Response in Action Suggestions

**Allow yourself to be held in the father’s merciful embrace. Embrace. Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

*Visit a cemetery where family members or friends are buried. Stop at their graves to remember and pray for them, stop also at the graves of several strangers and pray for those who are buried there.

ALL: Taste and see the goodness of the Lord!

1: I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be always in my mouth. My soul will glory in the Lord; let the poor hear and be glad. ALL: Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

11: Magnify the Lord with me; and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he answered me, delivered me from all my fears. All: Taste and see the goodness of the Lord!

111: Look to him and be radiant and your faces may not blush for shame. This poor one cried out and the Lord heard, and from all his distress he saved him. ALL: Taste and see the goodness of the Lord!

Psalms 34: 2-7