

Magnitude of God's Love and Mercy

This weekend marks the beginning of “**The Jubilee Year of Mercy**” as proclaimed by Pope Francis. It is a year of reconciliation between brothers and sisters of all walks of life, conversion, and a time to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. It calls for a time of personal and communal reflection, and to re-discover the true meaning of our faith and what we are all called to do as Catholics every day. The responsibility of being merciful does not rest only on Bishops, Priests, Deacons and all religious. We are **ALL** called to live the Gospel.

Haven't we all at some point felt inadequate to receive mercy from others, especially from God? I admit that in high school I viewed receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation as a graduation. I convinced myself that family, friends, school, and sports was enough, and that I didn't have time to commit to Church each week, let alone growing in relationship with God. Yet, God gently encouraged me, and I attended a Jesuit College. While I was on a retreat during my senior year, I finally understood the magnitude of God's love and mercy. The guest speaker told the story of the Prodigal Son. I had always focused on the relationship between the brothers. But now I was asked to view the father, who runs toward his estranged son with open arms, as God. Despite the prodigal son's wrongdoings, his father, with tears streaming down his face, embraces him. I realized that even when I did not show my love to God, He mercifully loved me. And despite my faults and my failings, God welcomed me back into the Church and has allowed me the opportunity to serve this amazing parish and lead the Religious Education Program. Only a few years before, I distanced myself from God, and here I was, inspiring the next generation of Catholics to love Jesus. God did not lose faith in me. When I learned that our Church would place at the altar Rembrandt's portrait of the Prodigal Son, I felt God gently speaking to me again, a testament to His mercy. Our faith journeys are all different, but we all have the opportunity to witness the same God running towards us, welcoming us with open arms back into His life.

Pope Francis is reaching out to all walks of life to change the way we think and live our lives for the greater good. It is a time to forgive and rebuild our Church with hope, love and compassion. Jesus teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount: “**Blest are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs.**” We all need mercy, whether we realize it or not. It is only when we recognize the truth that we have sinned and ask for forgiveness that we will receive mercy. It shows we are repenting of heart.

Today, after each mass, we are offering a book titled “**Everybody Needs to Forgive Somebody.**” It is eleven, short, true stories from all walks of life. We ask that each family take one and when completed, pass it along to someone who may need inspiration.

It is our hope, as we begin this year of mercy, we as a parish community will begin to foster the continuous need for forgiveness and create a community of love, hope, compassion and welcoming to all who pass through our doors. A people that recognizes that we are all human and are all in need of mercy. Are you ready to receive God's mercy and show mercy to His children?

Let us pray

Lord Jesus we ask that the Holy Spirit touch each one of us this day and ignite a fire in our hearts and bring change to each of us so that we may foster a greater love throughout our broken world. May He keep us vigilant to always be open to opportunities to be merciful - as He is merciful to us. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

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