



What Makes Us Catholic?

Mercy

Beginning in December, Catholics all over the world are asked to rediscover the richness of mercy as Pope Francis called for an extraordinary jubilee, a “Year of Mercy.” What is mercy? Do we all need this mercy? How can we practice mercy in our lives?

Mercy is a way that God shows us His love. Being merciful means to show compassion and gentleness to a needy people. We can best see God’s mercy in the story of the prodigal son. The father, despite his son leaving home, runs to his son when he returns and opens his arms to receive him because he loves his son. God is the father in this story and we are the son. God opens his arms to us when we return to Him despite us abandoning Him, *all because He loves us*. We can especially see this embrace of love through the sacrament of reconciliation when we return to the love of God and turn away from our sinfulness. God delights in our return!

Pope Francis asks us to show this same mercy to our own brothers and sisters. First, we must receive this mercy in order to give it away. If we are going to the sacrament of reconciliation we are receiving this mercy directly from Jesus Christ. We can also receive this mercy by making a daily examination of conscience, followed by repentance and a request for forgiveness. Before you go to bed, look at how you acted or reacted throughout the day. When did you love God and when didn’t you love God throughout the day? Seeing where we fall short can help us have compassion on others that might struggle with the same things. Then, remember to thank Him for letting us see our sinfulness and the good we do. Too much focus on sin alone leads to more sin, but a balance leads us to holiness.

May the Church be more like the father in the parable of the prodigal son, always seen with its arms stretched open, ready to embrace the sinners that we all are, back into the love of God.

Want to read more about this topic?

Sources:

- Pope Francis’s Year of Mercy Letter: <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2015/09/01/full-text-pope-franciss-year-of-mercy-letter/>
- St. Joseph's Educational Center website: <http://sjeciowa.org/mercy>
- Des Moines Diocese: <http://www.dmdiocese.org/jubilee.cfm>
- Luke 15: 11-32; John 8:1-11
- #MillionActsofMercy

Please note your question on this topic, or other topics you would like to learn more about below and leave it in the box on the “What Makes Us Catholic?” stand.

NAME _____ Phone # and/or Email _____