



NOVEMBER 2016: THE FATHER, RICH IN MERCY

Bulletin Reflection - *This reflection is sized to fit in a column of a parish bulletin.*

Jubilee Year of Mercy – God the Father, Rich in Mercy

The director of the Christian rehab facility was explaining its approach. "Around here we don't talk about God the Father," he said. "Fathers have too bad a reputation. Instead of loving their families well, many have deserted their families, or are abusive. "Father" brings up bad memories. So it's all about Jesus for months until they're ready to hear."

What a tragedy! As many others can attest, fathers who live up to their calling—even if they're not perfect—help us to see the face of our heavenly Father. The best fathers, by mirroring God's love to their children, are faithful, kind and merciful. But even when they're not, God the Father is all of these things. He *is* love, and there's no end to his mercy.

What does that mean? When God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush, he didn't just say, "I AM." He began to explain: "*I have seen*" the afflictions of my people, he said. "*I have heard*" their cry. "*I know*" their sufferings, and "*I have come down*" to deliver them. That is mercy! In Latin, *miser cordia*: "miserable heart." Fr. George Kosicki, CSB, describes it as "having a pain in your heart for the pains of another, and taking pains to do something about their pain." God is the same today. He sees our need, he hears our cries, he knows our sufferings, and he has come down to deliver us. His mercy never ends.

So many people have "father wounds." We long for someone to see and hear and know us -- and love us unconditionally. Our own fathers may fall short, but God does not fall short! He is the ultimate Father. And because he is who he is, because he lavishes his mercy on us, we can be merciful too.

–Sarah Christmyer, St. Norbert Parish, Paoli, Catholic author and speaker

Quote from Catholic Tradition:

"God is a Father who never abandons his children, a loving Father who supports, helps, welcomes, forgives, saves, with a fidelity that immensely surpasses that of men, opening up to an eternal dimension...The love of God never fails, never tires of us, it is a love that gives to the extreme, even to the sacrifice of His Son. Faith gifts us this certainty, which becomes a sure rock in the construction of our lives so that we can face those moments of difficulty and danger, experience those times of darkness, crisis and pain, supported by the faith that God never abandons us and is always near, to save us and bring us to life. It is in the Lord Jesus that we fully see the benevolent face of the Father who is in heaven." -Pope Benedict XVI

To continue reflecting on this theme, consider one of these resources!

- **Recommended Book for the Month:** *Abba's Heart*, Neal Lozano
- **Lighthouse Catholic Media CD:** *To Hell and Back: Divine Love and the Cross* by Anne Marie Schmidt