

**POPE FRANCIS' GENERAL AUDIENCE: On Mercy and Correction**

'The people of God, namely the Church, does not need dirty money; She needs hearts open to God's mercy'

March 2, 2016. Rome. zenith.org

**THE HOLY FATHER'S CATECHESIS:**

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

In speaking of divine mercy, we have often evoked the figure of the father of a family, who loves his children, who helps them, who takes care of them, who forgives them. And, as father, he educates them and corrects them when they are mistaken, fostering their growth in goodness.

God is presented thus in the first chapter of the prophet Isaiah, in which the Lord, as an affectionate but also attentive and severe Father, addresses Israel, accusing it of infidelity and corruption, to bring it back to the way of justice. Our text begins thus:

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;

for the Lord has spoken:

'Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth,

for the LORD speaks:

Sons have I raised and reared,

but they have rebelled against me!

An ox knows its owner,

and an ass,\* its master's manger;

But Israel does not know,

my people has not understood" (1:2-3).

Through the prophet, God speaks to the people with the bitterness of a disappointed father: He has made his children grow, and now they have rebelled against Him. Even the animals are faithful to their masters and recognize the hand that feeds them; the people, instead, no longer recognize God, they refuse to understand. Although wounded, God lets love speak, and He appeals to the conscience of these degenerate children so that they will repent and allow themselves to be loved again. This is what God does! He comes to us so that we will let ourselves be loved by Him, by our God.

The father-son relation, which the prophets often make reference to when speaking of the covenant relation between God and His people, has been perverted. The educational mission of parents is geared to making them grow in freedom, to make them responsible, capable of doing good works for themselves and for others. Instead, because of sin, freedom becomes a pretension of autonomy and pride leads to opposition and to the illusion of self-sufficiency.

See, then, how God calls back His people: "You have mistaken the way. "Affectionately and bitterly He says "my" people, — God never disowns us, we are His people, the most evil of men, the most evil of women, the most evil of peoples are His children. And God is like this: He never, never, disowns us! He always says: "Son, come." And this is our Father's love; this is God's mercy. It gives us hope to have such a Father; it gives us trust. This belonging should be lived in trust and in obedience, with the awareness that everything is a gift, and that it comes from the Father's love. And, instead, behold the vanity, the foolishness, and the idolatry.

So the prophet now turns to this people directly with severe words, to help them understand the gravity of their fault:

"Ah! Sinful nation, people laden with wickedness,

evil offspring, corrupt children!

They have forsaken the LORD,

spurned the Holy One of Israel,

apostatized" (v.4).

The consequence of sin is a state of suffering, consequences that the country also suffers, devastated and rendered like a desert, to the point that Sion — namely Jerusalem —, becomes uninhabitable. Where there is rejection of God, of His paternity, life is no longer possible, existence loses its roots, everything seems perverted and annihilated. However, this painful moment is also in view of salvation. The trial is given so that the people can experience the bitterness of one who abandons God, and, therefore, are confronted with the desolating emptiness of a choice of death. Suffering, the inevitable consequence of a self-destructive decision must make the sinner reflect, to open him to conversion and forgiveness.

And this is the way of divine mercy: God does not treat us according to our faults (Cf. *Psalms* 103:10). Punishment becomes the instrument to incite to reflection. Thus one understands that God forgives His people, gives grace and does not destroy everything, but always leaves the door open to hope. Salvation implies the decision to listen and to let oneself be converted, but it is always a free gift. Therefore, in His mercy, the Lord indicates a way that is not that of ritual sacrifices, but rather of justice. The worship is criticized not because it is useless in itself, but because, instead of expressing conversion, it pretends to substitute it, and so becomes the search for one's own justice, creating the deceitful conviction that it is the sacrifices that save, not divine mercy that forgives sin. To understand this well: when one is sick one goes to the doctor; when one feels himself a sinner one goes to the Lord. However, if instead of going to the doctor, one goes to a magician, one is not healed. So many times we do not go to the Lord, but prefer to go on mistaken paths, seeking outside of Him justification, justice and peace. God, says the prophet Isaiah, is not pleased with the blood of bulls and lambs (v. 11), especially if the offering is made with hands soiled with the blood of brothers (v. 15). However, I think of some benefactors of the Church who come with an offering — "Take this offering for the Church" — which is the fruit of so many exploited, mistreated, enslaved people with badly paid work! I would say to these people: "Please, take back your check, burn it." The people of God, namely the Church, does not need dirty money; she needs hearts open to God's mercy. It is necessary to approach God with purified hands, avoiding evil and doing good and justice. How beautiful is the way the prophet ends:

"Wash yourselves clean!

Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes;

cease doing evil;

learn to do good.

Make justice your aim: redress the wronged,

hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow" (vv. 16-17).

Think of the many refugees that disembark in Europe and do not know where to go. Then the Lord says even if your sins are red like crimson, they shall be as white as snow, and pure as wool, and the people will be able to eat the good of the land and live in peace (v. 19).

This is the miracle of the forgiveness that God, as Father, wants to give His people. God's mercy is offered to all, and these words of the prophet are also valid for us all today, called to live as children of God. Thank you.

# St. Gerard Catholic Church



640 Edrie St. NE  
Aiken, SC 29801  
803 649-3203

## The Fourth Sunday Of Lent March 6, 2016

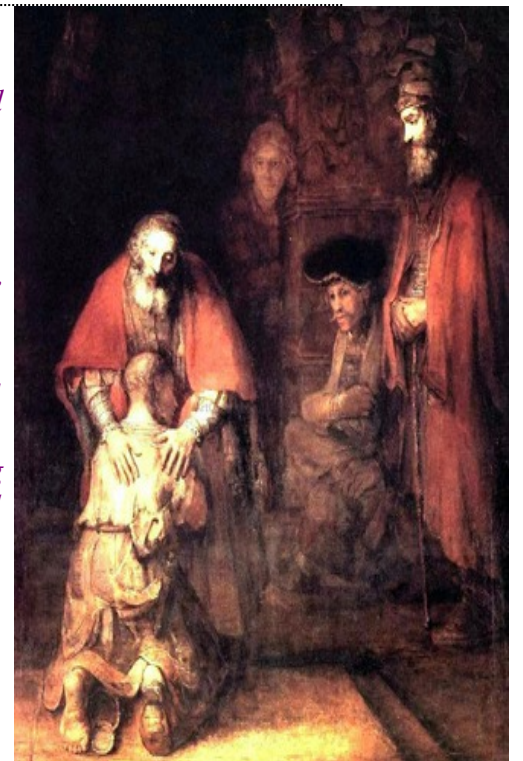
**Mission Statement**  
*Called to be a People for Others*

**Vision Statement**

*Anchored by faith hope and love in Jesus Christ,  
we strive to be active disciples, serving each  
other and all God's people by welcoming and  
embracing the enriching diversity of our community of faith.*

**Fr. Emmanuel Andinam: Administrator**

*So he left the place and went back  
to his father. While he was still a  
long way off, his father saw him and  
was moved with pity. He ran to the  
boy, clasped him in his arms and  
kissed him. Then his son said,  
"Father, I have sinned against  
heaven and against you. I no longer  
deserve to be called your son." But  
the father said to his servants,  
"Quick! Bring out the best robe and  
put it on him; put a ring on his  
finger and sandals on his feet. Bring  
the calf we have been fattening, and  
kill it; we will celebrate by having a  
feast, because this son of mine was  
dead and has come back to life; he  
was lost and is found." And they  
began to celebrate.*



**Luke 15:20-24**

**SUNDAY READINGS**

**First Reading:**

*Joshua 5:9, 10-12*

**Responsorial:**

*Psalms 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7*

**Second Reading:**

*Second Corinthians 5:17-21*

**Gospel:**

*Luke 15:1-3, 11-32*

**Today's Missal**

**Lectionary Readings for the  
week of February 28, 2016**

Monday: *Isaiah 65:17-21;*

*John 4:43-54*

Tuesday: *Ezekiel 47:1-9,12;*

*John 5:1-16*

Wednesday: *Isaiah 49:8-15;*

*John 5:17-30*

Thursday: *Exodus 32: 7-14;*

*John 5:31-47*

Friday: *Wisdom 2:1a,12-22;*

*John 7:1-2,10,28-30*

Saturday: *Jeremiah 11:18-20;*

*John 7:40-53*

**Mass Times:** Weekdays Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 8:15 AM, First Friday Benediction after Mass  
Weekend Saturday 4:00 PM, Sunday 7:00 AM and 11:15 AM

**Confessions:** after weekday Masses and by Appointment

**Office Hours:** 9:00 AM till 3:00 PM Tuesday - Thursday

**Bible Study:** Fridays 10:00 AM (Insight to the scriptures)

**Baptisms, Confirmations and Marriages:** By Appointment, Contact the office.

**Contact Us:** Phone 803 649-3203, E-Mail [stgerardscatholi@atlanticbbn.net](mailto:stgerardscatholi@atlanticbbn.net)

**Facebook @stgerardaiken, Emergency number for Father 803 637-2027**



**Pray for our sick:**  
 Gary Gilbert  
 Marge Glouser  
 Leonard Saunders  
 Shirley Paige  
 William and Jackie Cobbs  
 Woody Alexander  
 Lena Mickens  
 Rosa Johnson  
 Brenda Ligons  
 Joe Fulmer

*As we experience the Paschal Mystery, we renew our goal as faithful stewards to give freely and generously to help build God's kingdom on earth. In this season and in all seasons, we share our gifts as we strive to live as an Easter people.*



**Pastoral Council:**  
 Wayman Johnson, Chairman  
 Payson Borst  
 Jacqueline Brown  
 Fredrick Cadek  
 Nancy Durden  
 Marge Glauser  
 Janet Menefee  
 Gregory Wright  
 Joan Hesik


**Mass Intentions**  
 4:00 PM -7:00 AM Masses are said for your own personnel intentions. 11:15 AM for the soul of John Lauer (love in Jesus)

**Weekend Offering**  
 February 27-28 2016  
 Collection \$2,060.00  
 Needed \$2,612.00  
 Under \$552.00  
 Attendance 148  
 Stewardship a way of life

*The Gathering Hymn is 110 M*  
*Again We Keep This Solemn Feast*  
*The Offertory Hymn is 124 M*  
*Soul of My Savior*  
*The Communion Hymn is CHOIR 604 BB*  
*Christ Be Our Light*  
*The Recessional Hymn 11 M*  
*From the Depths We Cry to Thee*



**Finance Council:**  
 Robert Erikson, Chairman  
 Leon Gagnon and Anna Marie Key, Auditors  
 Lisa Solenberger  
 Art Wagner

| <b><u>Lay Ministers</u></b>   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|  | <b>Saturday March 12</b><br>4:00 PM Vigil Mass<br>Lector: Joan Hesik<br>E E Ministers: Barbara Dixon       | <b>Sunday March 13</b><br>7:00 AM Mass<br>Denise Gelinias<br>Roger Gelinias          |
|   | <b>Saturday March 19</b><br>4:00 PM Vigil Mass<br>Lector: Tami Schaeffer<br>E E Ministers: Jerry Schaeffer | <b>Sunday March 20</b><br>7:00 AM Mass<br>Mary Kay L'Esperance<br>Gerard L'Esperance |
|   | <b>Sunday March 13</b><br>11:15 AM Mass<br>Sheila Wagner<br>Mary Rose                                      | <b>Sunday March 20</b><br>11:15 AM Mass<br>Janet Menefee<br>Jacqueline Brown         |



**Refreshments** March 6 Janet Menefee/Joan Lacombe  
 March 13 Jackie Brown/Jeanette Coleman

**Second Collection for: Catholic Relief Service**



*The last date for the K of C Lenten Fish Fry will be on Friday the 18th from 6 to 8 PM. \$7.00 adults 12 and under \$4.00 Come join the fellowship and have a great meal. Call for reservations (803) 648-3684.*

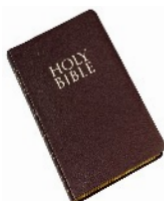
*Stations of the Cross Wednesdays 3/9, 3/16 at 6:30 PM Soup Supper after stations during Lent. Sign up sheet is in the hallway.*

*Easter Lilies Memorial \$8 by Palm Sunday please in order to get them in the bulletin.*

*The Legion of Mary meets Fridays at 1:30 PM here in the church hall.*



**Bible Study**  
 10:00 AM Fridays Except on Good Friday



*Lenten Communal Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation March 15, 2016 at 5:00 PM*

*No regular daily Masses during Holy Week*

*No RCIA Tuesday March 22nd*

**Finance Council and Parish Council meetings at 5:30 and 6:30 respectively on March 8th**

**Confirmation Classes at 10.00 AM Sundays (not Easter Sunday)**

**Holy Week Masses** Holy Thursday Mass 8:00 PM, Good Friday 3:00 PM, Saturday Vigil 8:30 PM, Easter Sunrise 7:00 AM Morning Mass 9:00 AM

**Volunteer Corner**  
 Thanks to The Gagnons and Eriksons, they are here at the church almost every day in some capacity. They are an enormous help. And to all those that are over worked but still help out with the operations of St. Gerard, Thank You.

*ACTS is partnering with the Augusta/Aiken Warrior Project (AWP) to provide available assistance to local Warriors of all service branches, regardless of era of service or wounded status. Please ask any veterans (especially post-9/11 veterans) to contact ACTS at ph#803.642.5919*

*Please pray for father's Prison ministry.*

**Perpetual Novena in honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Tuesdays at the 8:15 Mass.**

**The St Gerard Float won third place overall in the Black History Parade.**  
 The St Gerard Float was full of symbols and meaning not easily recognized by the causal eye. The float theme was "Great Afro-Americans. Honoring our past, embracing our future". The dark red represented blood shed associated with the will to survive and motivation to take action leading to pioneering spirit, leadership qualities promoting ambition and determination. The white represents equality, implying fairness and impartiality ready to improve their lives with all the colors of the spectrum from their life experiences. Pictures of accomplished African Americans were attached to the float. The float was tiered indicating climbing to greater achieve in the future with the youth riding the higher tiers. St Gerard being a religious organization, the float was adorned with crosses symbolizing that throughout the Afro American history we had cross to bear much as our Savior. Finally picture of the early beginnings of St Gerard was hung showing St Gerard as part of Aiken's history and multicolored borders showing that now St Gerard is a multicultural parish.

**There is a box in the rear of the church for donations for the three lady parishioners that are expecting this spring and summer. This is for a gift for each of them to be given the Sunday after Easter.**

*Feed The Valley Weekend. Thank you and please continue the generous contributions on the first weekend of the month.*

We need YOU to be a Light of Hope serving those in Need!!!

Do you have an hour or two a week to help?

Emergency Assistance

- EA Caseworker
- Receptionist
- Voicemail

Food Pantry

- Food Pantry Helper
- Food Pantry Pickup Helper
- Food Pantry Driver



GED Program

- Math Tutor
- English Tutor

Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Center  
 2443 Augusta Rd  
 Gloverville, SC 29828  
 Contact Volunteer Coordinator:  
 Deondra Roper  
 Phone: 803.593.2623 or 803.857.6053

**Knights of Columbus Academic Scholarships**

*Each year the Aiken Knights of Columbus, Council #3684, awards scholarship assistance to eligible applicants. Scholarships are based solely on demonstrated ability and will be awarded based on: school grades, standardized test scores, quality of the. Essay submitted, letters of recommendation, and community or extracurricular involvement. With few exceptions, scholarship assistance will require a minimum grade average of B or 3.00 in high school and 1600 or higher SAT scores (or equivalent). All scholarship applications must be received by April 30, 2016. All scholarships awarded are renewable up on re-application; provided a recipient maintains a B or 3.00 grade average, and is a worthy campus citizen. Scholarship interviews may be an integral part of the evaluation. For more information or an application form, call Tom Meisner at (803) 649-4721 or Chuck Goergen at (803) 649-4097.*

**In Harms' Way:** Please remember in your prayers our Nation and loved ones of our parishioners currently serving in harms' way: James Ligon, Robert McHugh, Jacob Hershey, and James Rossini. Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need. I ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

**Hospital Visits:** If you or a loved one is in Aiken Regional Hospital (ARMC) please let St Gerards know. Remember - ARMC does not inform us of Catholic patients, even if you register as a Catholic; it is up to the patient or family to do so. You can: ask the ARMC Chaplain to call the Catholic church, ask your nurse to inform the Catholic church ( name & room number), call-St.Gerard at 649-3203 and leave a message or email St Gerard at: stgerardscatholi@Atlanticbnn.net.

**Town Hall II: A Town Hall Meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2016 at 2:00 PM in the church hall. We will have 2 hours to discuss topics. The target subject is renovation of the entire campus. We will also have an open house for the newly remodeled rectory before and after the 4:00 PM mass.**

**Be a good steward, make sure the church is secured prior to leaving after Mass.**