

POPE FRANCIS' GENERAL AUDIENCE; On the Parable of the Prodigal Son

This teaching of Jesus is important: our condition of children of God is fruit of the love of the Father's heart; it does not depend on our merits or our actions and, therefore, no one can take it away, not even the devil! No one can take away this dignity.' Rome, May 11, 2016. Zenit.org

Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Today, this audience is being held in two places: as there was the danger of rain, the sick are in Paul VI Hall and connected with us with a giant screen – two places but only one Audience. We greet the sick who are in Paul VI Hall.

Today, we wish to reflect on the parable of the merciful Father. It speaks of a Father and his two sons, and it makes us know the infinite mercy of God.

We begin from the end, that is, from the joy of the Father's heart, who says: 'Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found' (Luke 15: vv. 23-24). With these words the Father interrupted his younger son at the moment he was confessing his fault: "I no longer deserve to be called your son ..." (v. 19). However, this expression is unbearable for the heart of the Father, who instead hastens to restore to his son the signs of his dignity: the best robe, the ring and the shoes. Jesus does not describe a Father who is offended and resentful, a Father that, for instance, says to his son: "you'll pay for this." No, the Father embraces him, awaits him with love. On the contrary, the only thing that the Father has at heart is that this son is before him safe and sound, and this makes him happy and he celebrates. The welcome of the son that returns is described in a moving way. "While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him." (v. 20). How much tenderness; he saw him from afar: what does this mean? That the Father went out continually on the terrace to look at the road and see if his son was returning; that son who had done just about everything, but the Father awaited him. How beautiful is the Father's tenderness! The Father's mercy is overflowing, unconditional, and it is manifested before the son speaks. The son certainly knows he has erred and he acknowledges it: "I have sinned ... treat me as one of your hired servants"(v. 19). But these words dissolve in face of the Father's forgiveness. His Father's embrace and kiss make him understand that he was always considered son, despite everything. This teaching of Jesus is important: our condition of children of God is fruit of the love of the Father's heart; it does not depend on our merits or our actions and, therefore, no one can take it away, not even the devil! No one can take away this dignity. This word of Jesus encourages us never to despair. I think of mothers and fathers in apprehension when they see their children distancing themselves, entering dangerous ways. I think of parish priests and catechists who sometimes wonder if their work was in vain. But I also think of those who are in prison, and who think that their life has ended; of all those who have made mistaken choices and are unable to look at the future; of all those who hunger for mercy and forgiveness and believe that they do not merit it ... In whatever situation of life, I must not forget that I will never cease to be a child of God, of a Father who loves me and awaits my return. Even in the most awful situation of life, God awaits me, God wants to embrace me, God awaits me.

There is another son in the parable, the elder; he is also in need of discovering the Father's mercy. He has always remained at home, but he is so different from the Father! His words lack tenderness: 'Look, All These Years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders ... But When Your son returns ... ' (vv. 29-30). We see the contempt: he never says: "Father," he never says "brother," he only thinks of himself; he boasts of having remained always beside the Father and of having served him; yet he never lived this closeness with joy. And now he accuses the Father of never having given him a kid to make merry. Poor Father! One son went away, and the other was never truly close to him! The Father's suffering is like the suffering of god, the suffering of Jesus when we distance ourselves, or because we go far away or because we are close without being close.

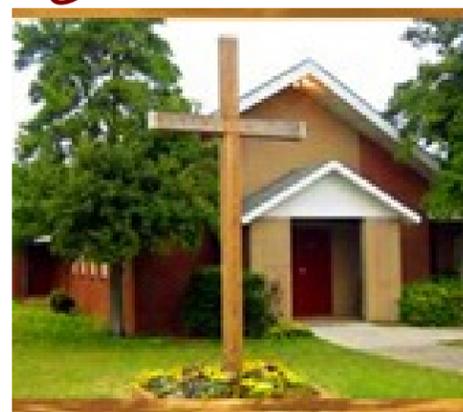
The elder son is also in need of mercy. The just, those who believe themselves just, are also in need of mercy. This son represents us when we wonder if it is worthwhile to toil so much if then we receive nothing in return. Jesus reminds us that one does not remain in the Father's house to have a compensation, but because one has the dignity of co-responsible children. It is not about "bartering" with God, but about following Jesus who gave Himself on the cross without measure.

"My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice" (v. 31). So says the Father to the elder son. His is the logic of mercy! The younger son thought he merited a punishment because of his sins; the elder son expected a recompense for his services. The two brothers do not speak to one another; they live different stories, but both reason according to a logic that is foreign to Jesus: if you do good you receive a prize, if you do evil you get punished. And this is not Jesus' logic, it isn't! This logic is subverted by the Father's words: "It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found" (v. 31). The Father recovered his lost son, and now he can also restore him to his brother! Without the younger, the elder son ceases to be a "brother." The Father's greatest joy is to see that his sons acknowledge each other as brothers.

The sons can decide whether to unite themselves to the Father's joy or to refuse. They must question themselves about their desires and about the vision they have of life. The parable ends leaving the end in suspense: we do not know what the elder son decided to do. And this is a stimulus for us. This Gospel teaches us that they were all need of entering the Father's house and taking part in His joy, in His celebration of mercy and of fraternity. Brothers and sisters, let us open our heart to be "merciful like the Father!"

The Office of Continuing Education of Priests will offer a workshop on Developing Quality Lay Leadership and Teams on Wednesday, May 25, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Diocese of Charleston Pastoral Center, 901 Orange Grove Road. The cost will be \$30. The core of the Church's ministry is the volunteer base. The wonderful people who serve Our Lord in so many ways need skilled and vibrant people to lead them by capable management and inspiring guidance. This workshop will gather up important lessons learned from many resources and offer them to participants to take back to their home parish. There, with God's grace, their ministries will be strengthened and improved. This workshop is designed for clergy (priests and deacons) and laity. A maximum of 20 participants allows all to share their insights - triumphs and problems. This is part two of the workshop by Jim Helton, PhD., we offered in March. It is not necessary to have attended the earlier session to participate in this session. Rev. Msgr. Edward Lofton, Director of Continuing Education of Priests <office@sttheresachurch.com>

St. Gerard Catholic Church



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

SUNDAY READINGS

First Reading:

Acts 2:1-11

Responsorial:

Psalms 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

Second Reading:

First Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13:

Gospel:

John 20:19-23

Lectionary Readings for the

week of May 15, 2016

Monday: James 3:13-18;

Mark 9:14-29

Tuesday: James 4:1-10;

Mark 9:30-37

Wednesday: James 4:13-17;

Mark 9:38-40

Thursday: James 5:1-6;

Mark 9:41-50

Friday: James 5:9-12;

Mark 10:1-12

Saturday: James 5:13-20;

Mark 10:13-16

Pentecost Sunday May 15th, 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.*

Father Emmanuel Andinam: Administrator

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

Acts 1:1-4



Mass Times: Weekdays Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 8:15 AM,

First Friday Benediction after Mass

Weekend Saturday 4:00 PM, Sunday 7:00 AM and 9:00 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, **CCD:** Sundays 10:30 AM during school year,

RCIA: Tuesdays 10:00 AM

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

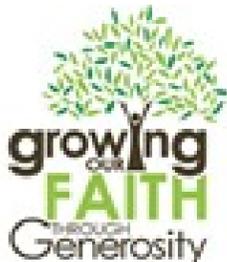
Contact Us: Phone 803 649-3203, **E-Mail** stgerardscatholi@atlanticbbn.net

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 and Ike Ligons
 Joe Fulmer

Every year we are witness to creation. New life springs up before us. Our joyful appreciation of nature can move us to preserve and safeguard one of God's fundamental gifts to us. God's gift of the world needs stewards to treasure and protect it.



Pastoral Council:

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

Finance Council:

Robert Erikson, Chairman
 Leon Gagnon and Anna Marie Key, Auditors
 Lisa Solenberger
 Art Wagner

Mass Intentions

4:00 PM, 7:00 AM Masses are said for your own personal intentions, 9:00 AM Mass For The Soul of Melba Key From A. Lauer

Weekend Offering
 May 8, 2016
 Collection \$2,323.00
 Needed \$2,612.00
 Under \$289
 Attendance 139
 Stewardship a way of life

The Gathering Hymn 746 H
 Baptized in Water
 The Offertory Hymn is 93 M
 Come, O Holy Spirit
 The Communion Hymn is CHOIR 448 BB
 By the Waking of our Hearts
 Our Song of Praise is 90 M
 Go Make of All Disciples



Lay Ministers

	Saturday May 21	Sunday May 22	Sunday May 22
Lector:	Diana Begic	Denise Gelinis	Janet Menefee
E E Ministers:	Barbara Dixon	Roger Gelinis	Mary Rose
	Saturday May 28	Sunday May 29	Sunday May 29
Lector:	David Didimamoff	Mary Key L'Esperance	Sheila Wagner
E E Ministers:	Pam Ziomek	Gerard L'Esperance	Wayman Johnson



Refreshments May 15
 Richardean Paige/Marilu Alarcon

Refreshments May 22
 Matt Fitzpatrick/?

Refreshments May 29
 Janet Menefee/Joan Lacombe

The Legion of Mary
 1:30 PM Fridays



Ask Cathy Ciani about membership

The parish council is looking at replacing the cleaning lady with parishioner volunteers. Call the office with suggestions or to volunteer.

Please pray for father and his Prison ministry.

We are looking for volunteers to clean the Rectory and Church. Call the Office

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

Effective last Thursday we have an updated and working security system. All individuals with key access to the building need to contact the office so we can get you up to speed. We do not want the security system going off when people need to get in the buildings.

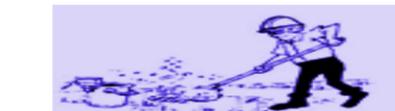
Second Collection for: Catholic Communication Campaign



Please keep Leonard Saunders and The Gagnons in your prayers.

Today is The Baptism of Connor Mason Smoak son of Elaine and Aaron Smoak God Parents Kaitlyn Chasey and James Rankin

Sorry for the Ministries schedule mistake last week.



Outside clean-up on June 11th from 7:30 AM-Until. We will do some landscaping and power washing. We will also sort out items in the building that we can throw out. Come join us.

Volunteer Corner
 Thanks to The Parish and Finance Councils and all that have taken on a committee.

Have a Heart!
 Donate Blood so that others may live. Many things in this world can wait. But a transfusion of blood to a dying patient cannot. Please choose to donate and save a life. The Knights of Columbus need you to Help save local lives! Sheppard Community Blood Center will conduct a Blood Drive At the New Saint Mary Help of Christian Church On Fairfield Street.
 Saturday, June 4th from 4:00 pm – 7:00 pm
 Sunday, June 5th from 7:45 am- 2:00 pm
 THE NEED IS CONSTANT.
 THE GRATIFICATION IS INSTANT.
 GIVE BLOOD.
 Thank You.
 Donors should drink plenty of water prior to donating!
 You will need a picture ID, driver's license, or donor card to donate.
 Each donor will receive a T-Shirt and a Free Lipid Profile after your 3rd donation in a calendar Year.

MERCY CENTER - COLORADO SPRINGS
2016 SPRING/SUMMER PROGRAMS FOR PERSONAL GROWTH & HEALING

The Tour of Mid-Life Transitions
 June 13-17 & August 8-12, 2016
 In Phase One of life each person will be guided by their chosen archetype that helps in creating a personal and professional life-style and identity. By mid-life each person will move into their second archetype and experience a second birth that can lead to wonderment and bliss or if resisted and ignored depression and darkness. How do you cross the "poison river" of mid-life so that the journey to personal and professional transformation can be completed? Learning how to navigate the deep waters of mid-life will be our shared exploration during this week of dare and adventure.
Spirituality & Recovery
 June 6-10 & August 1-5, 2016
 All addictions are the absence of a grounded and embodied spirituality. If your drug of choice is food, alcohol, drugs, sex, pornography, money, love, gambling, power or control this week long program will take you to the core of your wounded self. Through mandala assessment you will discover what is missing and how to rersonal and family grief and trauma can replicate itself in addictive thinking, feeling and behaving will lift the burden of guilt and shame. This program is designed for deep introspective moments, personal assessment and inner explorations while learning how to apply the power of prayer, forgiveness, serenity, achieving virtue and creating personal values that will guide you for a life time.

Mercy Center Inc., 520 W Buena Ventura St, Colorado Springs, CO 80907
 themercycenter@aol.com

The Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry is excited to announce the establishment of a Diocesan Missionary Team. The purpose of this groundbreaking program will be to evangelize youth in grades 6 – 12 and help them encounter Christ. Retreats will be offered beginning in September at our parishes and Catholic schools. To learn more or to help with the funding of this dynamic new program, go to <http://sccatholic.org/youth-ministry> see below

DIOCESAN MISSION STATEMENT
 To proclaim the "Good News" and draw young people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which will radically challenge and encourage them to embrace the life and mission of the Catholic Church.
DIOCESAN MISSIONARY TEAM VISION
 The vision for the Diocesan Missionary Team (DMT) is to reach young people "on the ground" in their parishes and Catholic schools. The DMT will evangelize young people where they are in their faith life. They will do this by offering young people an opportunity to not only hear about the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ but to learn and understand the grace of the truth that will set them free. It is the vision of the DMT that once young people have experienced the transformational grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, they will hunger and thirst to go deeper in their own Catholic faith life.
WHY DO WE NEED A DIOCESAN MISSIONARY TEAM?
 1. Youth leave the church because they have not encountered Christ and his unending love 2. 80% of Catholics are no longer Catholic by the time they are 23 3. Only 30% of Americans who were raised catholic are still practicing 4. 10% of all adults in America are ex-Catholics

acts SAVE THE DATE BE AN ACTS FAN!
 Purchase a fan at Lowe's of Aiken for \$17 June 3rd and 4th 10am-6pm and donate it to ACTS to be given to families in need in the Aiken area.

FREE EVENT
 Open to the public
 113 Langley Dam Rd.
 Burntstown, SC

Aiken County PRT
 www.aiken-county.org
 South Carolina's Front Door

acts 2ND ANNUAL CAR SHOW
 A Drive Against Hunger, Come Ride With Us
 Fun for the Whole Family
 June 11, 2016 10 am - 2 pm
 Non-perishable food & Financial donations

To become a vendor or enter a vehicle, contact us at 803.649.3800 or info@acts@aiken.org

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 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.