

Only way to know how much God loves you is to give him a try, pope says

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God is not stingy with his love and mercy; he is generous and forgiving, patiently waiting for his children who have sinned to come home, Pope Francis said.

God is the father described in the parable of the prodigal son, "a father who always waits for us, who always forgives us and who celebrates when we return," the pope said in his homily Friday during an early morning Mass in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

Pope Francis' homily focused on the day's reading from the Book of Hosea (14:2-10), in which God tenderly calls his people, who "have collapsed" with guilt, to return to the Lord to "receive what is good," and be healed and loved.

The passage underlines God's constant invitation for conversion and his yearning for his children to return to his loving embrace, the pope said, according to a report by Vatican Radio.

This call "of the father who tells his son, 'Come back, it's time to come home,'" is something everyone can reflect on "for many hours in prayer," the pope said.

"This is the heart of our father, God is like this: He never gets tired, never. And he did this for many centuries with so much apostasy, lots of apostasy from the people" who rejected or distanced themselves from God.

For people who believe they have so many sins that it would be impossible for God to forgive them, the pope said, "Well, try! If you want to discover the tenderness of this father, go to him and find out, then come and tell me about it."

In fact, "it's we who get tired of asking for forgiveness," not God, who is always the first to reach out with love, the pope said.

Just like Jesus worked miracles for those seeking help, God does the same "every day with us, when we have the courage to arise and go to him."

"From a business point of view, the balance sheet is in the red." God doesn't gain anything but always giving all the time; but "he wins" when it comes to love, he said.

He said God is not stingy with his love and mercy -- his is "not like the banquet of the rich man who had poor Lazarus at his door" and let him die hungry and wounded.

God "has a different banquet, like the father of the prodigal son," who waits expectantly every day and celebrates joyously and generously when he comes home.

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