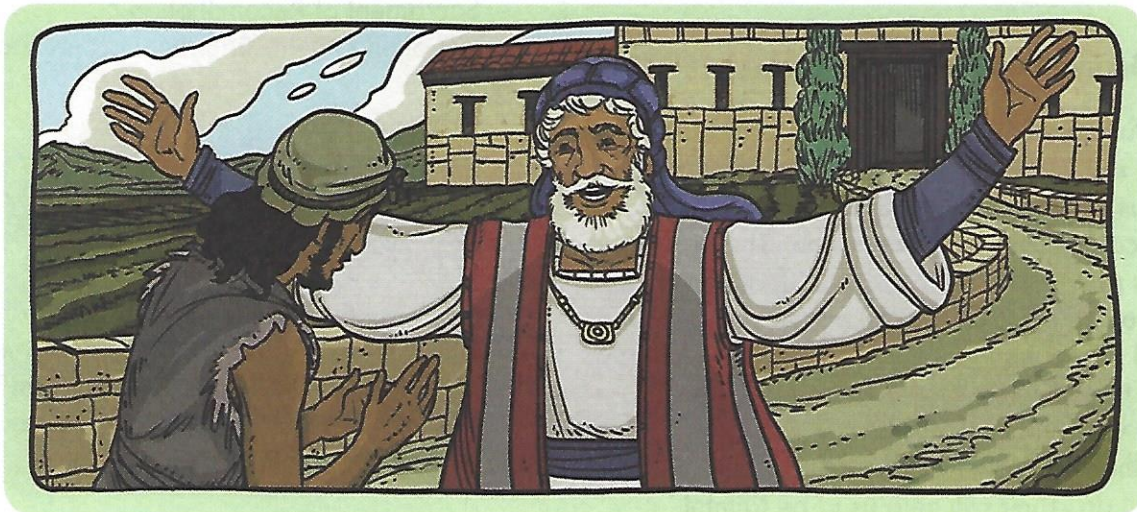


# Chapter 2:

## We Trust in God's Mercy



### Introduction

What choices do you make every day? Sometimes the choices are easy: Should I have chocolate or vanilla ice cream? Should I have an apple or a banana? Choices about our own actions are not always easy. Should I be mean or nice? Should I do what Mom or Dad asks, or not?

It does not matter if we have chocolate or vanilla ice cream. But it does matter if we are mean or nice and if we obey Mom or Dad. Sometimes we choose to do wrong. We sin. Sin is a choice to take the wrong path. But we can always come back. We can always make the next good choice.

### Scripture Story: The Forgiving Father

When Jesus walked on earth, he was well-known for telling stories, or parables. The Parable of the Forgiving Father is one of Jesus' most famous stories. It is about a son who ran away and came back. In this part of the parable, the son is on his

way home. He planned to tell his father how sorry he was that he had left home and wasted all his money. Let's see what happens next:

Jesus went on to say, . . . "[The sinful son] was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity, and he ran, threw his arms around his son, and kissed him. 'Father,' the son said, 'I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.' But the father called to his servants. 'Hurry!' he said. 'Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.'" (Luke 15:11, 20-24)

Look at the title of the story: "The Forgiving Father." In the beginning of this parable, the son wanted to leave. He wanted all of the money coming to him when his father died. He took the money and went far away. He spent all of it in very foolish ways!

Then when he had no money for food, he decided to go back home. He thought of his father's house, where everyone was cared for and well-fed. He decided to go back home. He said, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you." The father could have been angry with his son, but he was not. The father was a forgiving father. The father was filled with love and mercy and called for a celebration!

Our Father in Heaven is like this father. God is a forgiving father. God will always love us, welcome us back, and forgive us when we are sorry. Jesus told this parable so that we would always trust in God's forgiveness.

## God's Forgiveness and Mercy

This parable teaches us about God's forgiveness. Many times in the Gospels, Jesus teaches us about the importance of forgiveness. We must ask the people we hurt by our sins for their forgiveness. We must also forgive other people when they make mistakes or hurt us. We must do this even when people are not sorry for what they have done.

It is important that we also ask for God's forgiveness. We hurt our friendship with God when we sin. The special Sacrament in which we ask for God's forgiveness is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We ask God for forgiveness through the priest, and our sins are forgiven. We become reconciled, or reconnected, with God and with the Church. Sometimes other people may not forgive us, but God will always forgive us if we are truly sorry.

## God's Treasure of Forgiveness

When we confess our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we receive God's forgiveness.

At the very beginning of the Sacrament, the priest will greet us and welcome us. We then pray together the Sign of the Cross. Making the Sign of the Cross reminds us that we are baptized and that we belong to God. The priest will usually say

something like, "May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and to trust in his mercy" (*Rite of Penance*, number 42).

**Mercy** is the loving-kindness of God toward all of his children. When we go to confession, we trust in God's mercy, and we trust that if we are truly sorry for our sins, God will forgive us. When we confess our sins to the priest, he can never tell those sins to anyone else. He has made a promise never to tell what he hears in confession. This is called the seal of the confessional.

## Things to Remember

- God is a loving Father. He always forgives us when we are truly sorry for our sins.
- God's mercy and forgiveness come to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we confess our sins to the priest. He can never tell anyone else what he hears from us.