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Angelus: the three parables of mercy

At midday the Holy Father appeared at the window of his study to pray the Angelus with the thousands of faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square. The theme of his reflection was chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke, considered the "chapter of mercy", that brings together the three parables with which Jesus responds to the murmurings of the scribes and the Pharisees, who criticised him for associating with and dining with sinners. In the first parable, God is presented as a shepherd who leaves his ninety-nine sheep in search of the one who is missing. In the second, He is compared to a woman who has lost a coin and searches for it until she finds it. In the third parable, God is imagined as a father who welcomes home the son who had left.

A common element of all three parables is that expressed by the verbs that mean to rejoice together, to celebrate. The shepherd calls to his friends and neighbours and says, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost"; the woman calls her friends and neighbours and says, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost"; the father says to his other son, "It is fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found". "In the first two parables the emphasis is on a joy so irrepressible that it must be shared with friends and neighbours. In the third, it is placed on the celebration that begins in the heart of the father and extends to all his household".

"This, God's celebration of those who return to Him, repentant, is all the more in tune with the Jubilee Year we are experiencing, as is shown by the very term 'jubilee', that is, 'jubilation'", exclaimed the Holy Father, who went on to explain that with these three parables, Jesus presents to us the true face of God, a Father with open arms, who treats sinners with tenderness and compassion. "The parable that moves us the most, as it expresses God's infinite love, is that of the Father who .. embraces his embraces his son who has returned. And what impresses is most is not the sad story of a young man who falls by the wayside, but rather his decisive words: 'I will arise and go to my father'".

"The path that takes him back home is the way of hope and new life. God always waits for us to resume our journey; He awaits us patiently, He sees when we are still far from Him, He runs out to meet us, He embraces us, He kisses us, He forgives us. This is how God is. This is how our Father is. And his forgiveness cancels out the past and regenerates us in love. To forget the past- this is God's 'weakness'. When He embraces us, He forgives us and loses His memory ... He forgets the past. When we sinners repent and allow ourselves to be reunited with God, reproach and sternness do not await us; as God saves: he welcomes us back home with joy

and celebration”.

Francis added, “I ask you: have you ever thought that every time we go to the confessional, there is joy and celebration in heaven? Have you ever thought about that? It is beautiful ... and fills us with great hope, because there is no sin to which we have stooped from which, by the grace of God, we cannot rise up again. There is no person who is beyond recovery, no-one is beyond recovery. Because God never ceases to want what is good for us, even when we sin!”
