

Dear Padre,

My child's godparents make no attempt to build a special relationship with her. I've talked to them about it, but it didn't help. Can I replace them?

When my niece, Hayley, was five, she asked me to be her "step-godfather" because she didn't know who her godfather was. The family friend my sister invited to be Haley's godfather has moved out of state and seems to have forgotten that Haley is his godchild.

Godparents have responsibilities beyond baptism day. The Code of Canon Law says a godparent also "helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it" (872). A godparent should be present for the child's first Communion and encourage the child to live a Christian life as he or she grows older.

While neglectful godparents may not be replaced, parents are not limited to asking only two godparents to help their child grow in the faith.

"The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at baptism" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1255). Parents can and should ask others to help support their child's faith development as he or she grows up: a teacher, a grandparent, or a friend in the town where your child has gone away to college. After all, children are baptized into a community of believers, and we all have the responsibility to help children—and one another—lead Christian lives.



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Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about Dear Padre.



A WORD FROM Pope Francis

Your children will receive their Christian identity today. And you, parents and godparents, must safeguard this identity. This is your task throughout your lifetime: to protect the Christian identity of your children. It is a daily commitment: to make them grow with the light they will receive today.

ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM, JANUARY 9, 2022



Our Parish Community

September 11, 2022

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Ex 32:7-11, 13-14

1 Tm 1:12-17

Lk 15:1-32 or 15:1-10

Filled with Compassion

Too many people think of God only as one who is offended when we make a mistake and who is ready to exact punishment for that offense. The three stories in today's Gospel passage tell a different story. They tell how, when we make a mistake, God runs after us to bring us back. The description "filled with compassion" (Luke 15:20), which describes the sentiments of the Samaritan, is really a description of God.

In Hebrew, compassion or mercy comes from the word for "womb," and it describes the intimate bond between a woman and the life in her womb. Though the Greek word in the New Testament is not related to womb, it does mean deep inner sentiment. The word conveys the deep sentiment the Samaritan felt for a perfect stranger, the deep sentiment of the distraught father with his prodigal son, the deep sentiment of God for every one of us.

These three Gospel stories highlight another important point: The compassion was not a response to repentance. The lost sheep, the negligent woman, and the wayward son were all somehow responsible for their predicaments, but nothing was held against them. Nor did they have to correct their error before the situation was corrected. None of this mattered. This was Jesus' way of saying that God's compassion is there even before we ask for it, because compassion or mercy is not simply an act; it is the intimate and lasting love that God has for us.

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

FOR Reflection

- ★ Reflect on this passage from Isaiah 49:15:
"Can a mother forget...the child of her womb?"
- ★ Where might you show compassion to others?

[Jesus said,] "...There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance."

LUKE 15:7



SUZANNE TUCKER / SHUTTERSTOCK