

You are welcome back

When he was yet a great way off.

In short. The Catechism says the center of the parable of the prodigal son is the merciful father.¹ There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive.²

Key points

- The heart of the parable is the merciful father.¹
- The robe, the ring and the banquet are symbols of new life for anyone who returns to God.¹
- The gates of forgiveness are always open to anyone who turns away from sin.²
- Returning is a process born of the grace of God, who is rich in mercy.³

Try this, this week

1. **Read Luke 15:11–32 slowly.** Notice everything the father does.
2. **Sit in a church for five minutes.** You do not have to say anything.
3. **Say one honest sentence to God.** Something as simple as “I want to come back.”
4. **Look up confession times** at a parish near you, just to know.

“And rising up, he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him.”

Luke 15:20, Douay–Rheims

Watch out: what this does not mean

- The parable is about conversion, not only feelings: the son reflects, repents and decides to declare himself guilty before his father.¹
- Jesus calls sinners to conversion while showing them his Father’s boundless mercy.⁶

Common questions

Am I still Catholic?

The Church teaches that Baptism seals the Christian with an indelible spiritual mark of his belonging to Christ, which no sin can erase.⁴ The sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification.⁵

Is there anything God will not forgive?

The Church says there is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest.²

Remember: The father ran first.

Sources

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| 1. CCC 1439 | 4. CCC 1272 |
| 2. CCC 982 | 5. CCC 1446 |
| 3. CCC 1489 | 6. CCC 545 |

Quotation above: Luke 15:20, Douay–Rheims. Catechism: official text on vatican.va.

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