

Connecting Music to Mass
September 11 2016

Today's readings are found at #1163 in the hymnal.

Mercy. Compassion. Forgiveness. Each of today's readings mentions a person or group of sinful people who not only lived contrary to God's will, but *knowingly* did so. In the first reading, the people God led from slavery in Egypt turned away to worship the golden calf. In his letter to Timothy, Paul explains his "former life" of blasphemy and persecution of the Church. And finally, the well-known parable of the prodigal son, which speaks for itself. In all these cases, the sinners were not only forgiven, but forgiven willingly without terms, even for serious sinfulness. Spend some time thinking about these extreme cases of betrayal and rejection, and how liberating and transformative God's mercy is in response.

The opening hymn "Our Father, We Have Wandered" (#956) is not an ideal way to ignite everyone's hearts to celebrate the sacred mysteries. In other words, it's a little dreary to begin Mass! But, it perfectly recounts the parable we hear in the gospel, even mentioning the specific objects of "calf, and robe, and ring" at the end of stanza 2. It acknowledges our sinfulness; the times we have "hidden from God's face." The Israelites in the first reading and the prodigal son in the gospel both knew the extent of God's care, yet, they intentionally chose to turn and go the other way. How many times have we hidden, either in a period of darkness in our life, or in small but reoccurring sinful habits? Do we take God's mercy for granted?

There's a bit of beautiful irony in this hymn. The fact that the text is paired with the familiar tune of "O Sacred Head" sends a very pointed message, hinted at in stanza 3 – "O Lord of all the living, **Both banished and restored.**" The tune "O Sacred Head" (#512) recounts the Passion of our Lord. The text of "Our Father, We Have Wandered" acknowledges the way Jesus was humbled through his sacrifice, and raised up as a result. It's the same journey we see in the life of St. Paul through his conversion, and of the prodigal son when he returns home to his father who greatly celebrates his return.

While we begin our celebration more focused on our sinfulness and negligence towards God, the Liturgy of the Word concludes with the joyful return of the prodigal son. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist we celebrate Christ's *greatest* sacrifice for us – the greatest act of **mercy, compassion, and forgiveness** known to man. With all this, we leave on a joyful note – "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy" (#644). This uplifting hymn text celebrates God's love for us through the sacrifice on the cross. The colorful comparisons of God's love and mercy help us relate to how *truly wonderful* it is to be forgiven. As we go forth into our week, let us first acknowledge the times God has welcomed us home. It's only then that we'll be most open to showing that same mercy, compassion, forgiveness to everyone we encounter.

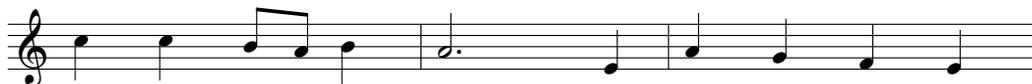
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Our Father, We Have Wandered



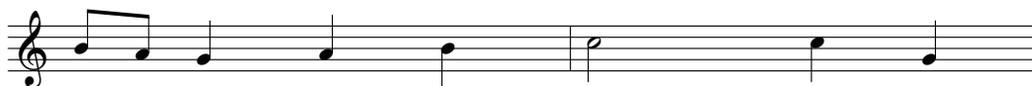
1. Our Fa - ther, we have wan - dered And
2. And now at length dis - cern - ing The
3. O Lord of all the liv - ing, Both



hid - den from your face; In fool - ish - ness have
e - vil that we do, Be - hold us, Lord, re -
ban - ished and re - stored, Com - pas - sion - ate, for -



squan - dered Your leg - a - cy of grace. But
turn - ing With hope and trust to you. In
giv - ing, And ev - er - car - ing Lord, Grant



now, in ex - ile dwell - ing, We
haste you come to meet us And
now that our trans - gress - ing, Our



rise with fear and shame, As, dis - tant but com -
home re - joic - ing bring, In glad - ness there to
faith - less - ness may cease. Stretch out your hand in



pell - ing, We hear you call our name.
greet us With calf and robe and ring.
bless - ing, In par - don, and in peace.

Text: Kevin Nichols, 1929–2006, © 1980, ICEL

Tune: PASSION CHORALE, 7 6 7 6 D; Hans Leo Hassler, 1564–1612; harm. by J. S. Bach, 1685–1750

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy



1. There's a wide-ness in God's mer-cy Like the wide-ness
2. For the love of God is broad-er Than the meas-ures
3. Trou-bled souls, why will you scat-ter Like a crowd of



of the sea; There's a kind-ness in God's jus-tice
of the mind; And the heart of the E-ter-nal
fright-ened sheep? Fool-ish hearts, why will you wan-der



Which is more than lib-er-ty. There is plen-ti-
Is most won-der-ful-ly kind. If our love were
From a love so true and deep? There is wel-come



ful re-demp-tion In the blood that has been shed;
but more faith-ful, We should rest up-on God's word;
for the sin-ner, And more grac-es for the good;



There is joy for all the mem-bers
And our lives would be thanks-giv-ing
There is mer-cy with the Sav-ior,



In the sor-rows of the Head.
For the good-ness of our Lord.
There is heal-ing in his blood.