

MERCY FREELY GIVEN

A few weeks ago, Pope Francis in a general audience reflected on one of the great parables of mercy, often called *The Prodigal Son*. He used the Scripture passage from Luke to show how God welcomes us all with an unconditional love – that even in the most difficult situations, God waits for us and longs to embrace us.



Take a look at Rembrandt's oil painting, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Where are you drawn to find yourself in the image? We probably find something of ourselves in each of the figures. Like the younger son, we have times in our lives when we strongly desire the embrace of a loving God, a God of mercy who never stops loving us. Like the son, we know the gratuitous love of God is totally unmerited. It is a free gift.

Do we see something of ourselves when we look at the older son, standing so tall, looking down on his brother? He had not failed as his brother had – he had been a loyal son. He had never caused his father such heartbreak. Henri Nouwen writes, "Faith ... is more than a matter of being obedient to rules. It has to do with a relationship with a God who loves all God's children very much. And that is something worth returning home for. Indeed, it is a cause to celebrate."

Do we see ourselves in the father? Can we be as welcoming and forgiving? It is the father who makes the first move and runs a long way to welcome his son. How often do we wait for someone who has hurt us or grown distant from us to take that first initiative? The parable of the prodigal son challenges us to behave like the merciful father and reach out first to those estranged from us—to go, in effect, the extra mile. This is mercy.

Free image from Wikipedia Commons: Rembrandt van Rijn, The Return of the Prodigal Son, c. 1661–1669.:

Anne Ferguson, Mission Animation, Parramatta

Dates to Remember

21st	Stage 3 – Canberra
22nd	overnight visit.
27th	Healthy Harold
28th	Healthy Harold
29th	Healthy Harold

August

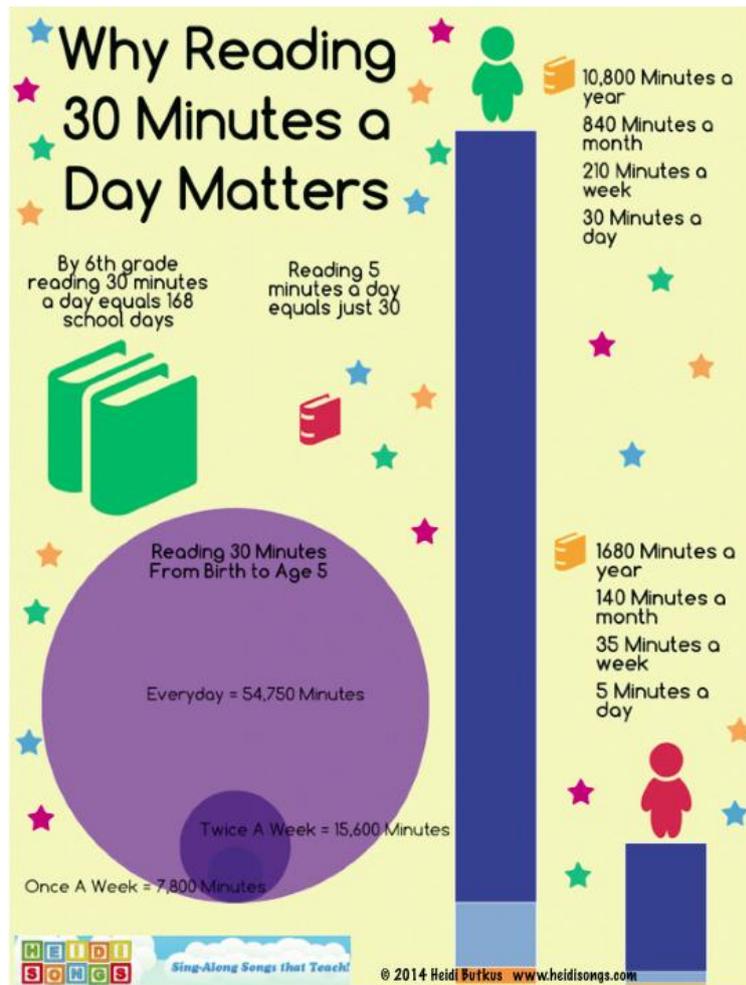
2nd	ICAS English Competition
5th	Multicultural Day
8th	Coffee n Chat 2:15pm
9th	Zone Athletics Carnival
12th	Assembly @ 2:30pm Whole School – Stage 2
16th	ICAS Maths Competition
22nd	BOOK Week

Focus On Learning



Reading at Home

At St Oliver's we place a great deal of emphasis on Reading. Our Home Learning policy states that The following infographic highlights the difference 30 minutes of reading each day can make over the course of a child's Primary school years.



Reading at home can take many forms and should ideally include time for your child to read to you **as well as** time when you read to your child.

All children K-6 benefit from opportunities to read to an audience. Reading aloud gives students the opportunity to develop their fluency, phrasing and expression.

All children K-6 also benefit from opportunities to be read to. Being read to gives students the opportunity to engage with the text through discussion and a shared experience. During this time students can be clarifying new vocabulary, discussing characters, setting and plot and sharing thoughts about the author's message.

In our increasingly busy lives it is sometimes tempting to overlook **daily** reading. We sometimes fail to give this time the value it deserves. However, as the infographic highlights - in doing so we are significantly shortchanging our children and denying them valuable opportunities to learn.