

# Our Father Who Art in Heaven

In this prayer Jesus draws us into his divine Family.

Jesus reveals who God is and “whose we are” and thus we grow to be aware of “who we are.”

In answer to his disciples who ask Jesus to teach them how to pray, Jesus tells them that if they desire to pray as he prays, then the disciples must allow themselves to be drawn by him into his relationship with his Father. **Likewise, if we want to pray as Jesus prayed, we must also allow ourselves to be drawn by Jesus into his relationship with his Father.** The Our Father is much much more than a prayer text. In it Jesus is revealing to us “our new life of living in the Kingdom of God, as his children who have been born again in water and the Spirit.” Jesus is teaching us to believe that God is our Father as well his Father. Because God is our Father, Jesus then is our Brother and we are his sisters and brothers. And we are sisters and brothers to each other. We must pray to receive the grace, the willingness, the desire to let Jesus draws us into relationship with his divine family—with his Father and the Holy Spirit and Mary and all the saints in glory and all his family on earth. We profess this truth, we believe this, but we are so poor of spirit that we need to ask the Holy Spirit to anoint us daily to grow praying as Jesus prays. When teaching us the Our Father, Jesus desires that we pray with him, joining with him, in our personal awareness of who we are before God our Father. We grow in our love and understanding of Jesus as we deepen our knowledge and love of who Jesus is—the Son of his Father. And we grow and deepen our knowledge of who we are, as we grow in the freedom and self-knowledge that we are sons and daughters of the Father—as revealed to us by Jesus. A deep relationship of love only exists between persons who truly know themselves and each other. This takes time and growing pains. Spouses and good friends experience this over the years as they grow in the personal knowledge of the “self” and the personal knowledge of the other. In mutual love, each grows to be more him-“self” or her-“self.”

As we grow in claiming and celebrating our identity as, our “true self” as sons and daughters of the Father, then we grow closer to Jesus as we pray with him to “his Father and our Father.” Quite possibly this may be what Jesus is teaching Mary of Bethany as she sits at his feet listening to him. His visit to the home of Martha and Mary in Luke’s Gospel comes immediately before he taught the disciples the “Our Father,” Luke links both events together for a purpose which the Holy Spirit will reveal to us in prayer. (See Luke 10:38-11:1.)

Earlier in chapter 10, Luke writes that when the 72 disciples rejoiced that they were able to dispel demons in his name, Jesus said to them, “Do not rejoice so much that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven.” By these words Jesus is revealing to them that who they are, **their identity as sons of his Father** is much greater to celebrate than any powerful work that they are able to do in proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Then Jesus follows by rejoicing in the Holy Spirit and thanking the Father for revealing himself to the people through his ministry and his disciples’ ministry. Jesus exclaimed, “All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him” (Luke 10:22). Twenty verses later Jesus does reveal to us who the Father is by teaching us to pray, calling God “our Father”. (Luke 11:1)

Unfortunately, over the years I have found in my own prayer as well as in the prayer of many, that when praying to God the Father, without even realizing it, we regard “Father” more as a title of distant authority than a family relationship of love. Some off-handedly, due to lack of knowledge, call God, “the Man Upstairs” or the “Big Guy,” the “Big Boss” or the “Man in Charge.” Many, even though they reverence the Father, do not have a heartfelt devotion to God the Father. Often in prayer, their affectionate devotion is directed to Jesus as the Sacred Heart or Christ on the Cross and an affectionate devotion to our Blessed Mother Mary or a special devotion to a favorite saint as St. Therese of Lisieux or St. Francis.

We may ask why God the Father is often regarded as distant and remote or even harsh? There are varied reasons. Tradition reveals God the Father is the Creator and the source of all authority. The word authority brings up a lot of memories and feeling about the way we were disciplined by our earthly fathers or mothers (be they devout Catholics or unchurched) or by other authority figures as priests and bishops who represent God to us. These negative experiences influence us to unconsciously regard God the Father through the lens of our past memories of parents, priests or teachers. On the whole, they loved us and did the best for us, but circumstances and their own upbringing caused them to relate to us in the way they did. Some fathers may show little or no affection in the family and give little affirmation because of the way their fathers treated them. Also, many fathers are absent from home due to long hours on the job. Moreover, “father wounds” may be very deep in children when fathers abandon them or physically or sexually abuse them. The revelation of sexual abuse in families and by priests and church personnel makes it very difficult for those abused to regard God as their Father.

So the reasons for viewing the Father as distant or harsh are varied. Healing these wounds and forgiving those who wounded us will only be experienced over time in prayer to the Father—as he is truly revealed by Jesus his Son. Our Father has compassion and heals deep wounds. That is why our prayer should be inspired by Jesus himself. He alone as the Son can breathe his Spirit within us to experience true devotion to the Father. So we sit with Mary of Bethany and listen as Jesus reveals to us his Father. As he draws us into communion with him to the Father, we will over time come to experience that we are the beloved children of the Father.

In addition to associating God the Father with authority figures, there is also the reality of the mystery of who God is. God may seem remote because he is “**transcendent.**” God is holy, i.e. “totally other,” infinitely above and beyond any creature that he created out of nothing. We, men and women are created in his image, but we will never fully know the mystery of his infinite being. God can never be fully comprehended by us. So he may appear to us as “God who is out there and far from us.”

But at the same time, and mysteriously so, God is also **imminent**, present to us closer than even we are to ourselves! Yes, he created us “out of nothing,” but we were created out of his infinite fatherly heart, his creative and transforming love for us. We will never be able to fully embrace or comprehend who God is. In our response to his goodness to us, we must surrender ourselves to do his will, his plan for us, trusting that he desires to share his life with us. We must be willing to be embraced by the life-giving mystery of his love for us.

However, as humans from the beginning of creation and up to the present our response to God has been one of mistrust of his love for us and this leads to disobedience and even rebellion. We want to “be our own gods, determining for ourselves what is good and what is evil.” I want to do it “my way.” In face of our sin, the entire Scripture, from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation, reveals God taking the initiative to open our eyes and hearts to the folly of selfishness and to allow him to save us. We all have sinned and lost our freedom by neglecting, forgetting or denying who we are, that we are his children. Paul writes that in response to our sinfulness **God the Father of mercy has “sent his Son, born of a woman....so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because we are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir”** (Galatians 4:4-7).

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**In the New Testament the word of God reveals the truth that we are sons and daughters of God our Father with Jesus his Son as our Brother in the Holy Spirit.**

The best way to allow Jesus to teach you how to pray is to listen and to meditate on his word and the words of those whom the Holy Spirit inspired. The Scripture passages which follow are only some among many, but they give the authentic word of the Spirit teaching you to pray to the Father as his child who has been “born again in water and the Spirit.” Be assured that in meditating on the Scripture, you are listening to Jesus his Son. To benefit most, it may be good to read over them all first and mark one or two that the Holy Spirit is drawing to your attention. Spending at least 10 to 15 minutes a day in solitude with the Lord and praying with one or two of these Scripture passages daily is the plan for this week. You may want to choose different ones each day, but if the Lord is drawing you to remain with one or two throughout the entire week, then do so. Settle down and listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to you as the Lord Jesus teaches you to pray as you ponder his word spoken to you personally. These scripture passages reveal who God is and who we are. By praying with Jesus in this way, we growing as men and women in the Kingdom of God and children of his Family.

Settle down with a brief few minute of the breathing exercise that we learned last week. Then in words such as these, or others that you choose, speak to the Lord Jesus:

*“Jesus, here I am sitting at your feet with Mary of Bethany listening as you speak to us, her and to me. I am drawn by your Spirit to read and listen to this word of God. Jesus, I do not simply want to think about what I am reading. I ask you to allow me to listen with my heart. Send your Holy Spirit to open within me a deeper appreciation of what I am reading. Let me ponder it as Mary your Mother pondered in her heart what she heard from you. Help me to hear with my heart what you desire me to receive. Help me to speak to the Father as you taught me to pray to him. He is my Father. Help me to become more aware and claim that I am his beloved child. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for drawing me to be at home with you during our brief time together.*

***“The word of God is alive and active. Shaper than any two-edged sword...  
discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart”*** (Heb 4:12).

John 1: 9-14:

“The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, **he gave power to become children of God**; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full to your Father of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, **glory as of the only Son from the Father.**”

Matthew 6:6-10:

“But when you pray go into your room and shut the door and pray **to your Father**, and your Father who is in secret and who sees in secret will reward you. And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do....Pray then like this: **Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be they Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done.**”

Matthew 12:49-50:

“And stretching out his hands toward his disciples, Jesus said, ‘Here are my mother and my brethren! **For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.**”

Luke 12:22-34:

And Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing... nor be of anxious mind. For all the nations of the world seek these things and your Father knows that you need them. Instead seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well. **Fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**”

Luke 6:35-36:

Love your enemies. Do good and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great and you will be children of the most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and selfish. **Be compassionate even as your Father is compassionate.**

Luke 15:11-32: (*Parable of the Prodigal Son* )

“While the son was yet at a distance, **his father saw him and had compassion**, ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am not longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to the servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry, for **this my son** was dead, and is alive again, he was lost and is found, And they began to make merry.”

John 6:32-36:

Jesus then said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; **my Father gives you the true Bread from heaven**. For the Bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.....I am the Bread of Life, he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst...**All whom the Father gives to me and him who comes to me, I will not cast out.**”

John 14:6:

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 14:23:

If a man loves me, he will keep my word, **and my Father will love him**, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

John 15:9-12:

“**As the Father has loved me, I also love you**. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my live, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

John 17:20, 24-26: *(Jesus' words as he prays to the Father at the Last Supper surrounded by his Apostles)*  
"I do not pray for these only [the Apostles at the table with him], but also for those who believe in me through their word....I have loved them even as you have loved me. **Father I desire that those you have given me may be with me where I am to behold my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world...** I have made known to them your name and I will make it known that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Words of Jesus over the wine: *(Drinking his Blood, we become blood brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.)*  
"Take this all of you, and drink from it. **For this is the Chalice of my Blood**, the Blood of the New and Eternal Covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me."

John 19:25-28: *(As he dies, Jesus gives his Mother to us. We are children of Mary as well as of the Father.)*  
"Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and his disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, **'Woman behold your son!'** Then he said to the disciple, **'Behold your mother!'** And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home."

Luke 23:34, 46:

"Jesus said, **'Father forgive them** for they know not what they do.' "Then, Jesus crying out in a loud voice said, **'Father into your hands I commend my spirit.'** And having said this, he breathed his last."

John 20:16- 17: *(Jesus' words to Mary Magdalene in the Garden after he rose from the dead)*

"Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned to him and said in Hebrew, 'Rabboni.'" Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have yet ascended to the Father; but say to **my brethren** and say to them, **'I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.'**"

John 20:21: *(Jesus' words to the disciples in the Upper Room after his Resurrection)*

"Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. **As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.** And when he had said this, **he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'**"

Romans 8:15-18:

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, **'Abba Father!'** **it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God**, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, ;provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

Ephesians 2:4-7:

**"God the Father, who is rich in mercy**, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead because of our sins, made us alive together with Christ (by grace we have been saved) and raised us up with him in the heavenly places with Jesus Christ, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Jesus Christ."

Excerpts of Eucharistic Prayer: *(As taught by Jesus to pray, the Church prays to the Father in most liturgical prayers with Christ beside us in the power of the Holy Spirit. Often "Lord" is used to designate the Father.)*

"You are indeed Holy O Lord (Father) and all you have created gives you praise, for through you Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power and working of the Holy Spirit, you give life to all things and make them holy, and you never cease to gather a people (family) to yourself....."

Grant that we who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son, and filled with his Holy Spirit, we may become one body, one spirit in Christ. May he make of us an eternal offering to you, so that we may obtain the inheritance with your elect (here we mention the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Blessed Joseph and others.)....."

We hope to enjoy forever the fullness of your glory through Christ our Lord, through whom you bestow on the world all that is good

***Through Christ Jesus your Son, and with him and in him,  
O God almighty Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honor is yours for ever and ever. Amen.***

