

Our Father Who Art in Heaven!

Ave Maria Catholic Church, July 27, 2025. Fr. David M Vidal

The gospel of this Sunday's liturgy offers us one of the most beautiful teachings of Jesus. He taught us to call God, Our Father! This teaching is new and surprising, and at the same time, very consoling! God is "Our Father," and He loves us with fatherly love!

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we read that "*The expression God the Father had never been revealed to anyone. When Moses himself asked God who he was, he heard another name. [I am who I am, that is Yahweh] [And the Catechism continues its explanation] The Father's name has been revealed to us in the Son, for the name Son implies the new name Father ' (Tertullian, De oratione, 3)'*" (Catechism, 2779).

1. Jesus teaches us to turn to God as our Father.

If we read the Gospels with attention, we will learn that Jesus lives and works in constant reference to the Father. He frequently calls Him by a name that is full of affection: "**Abba.**" Even during the most painful moments of his passion in Gethsemane, Jesus calls the Father by using the Aramaic word "**Abba**" (see Mk 14:36 and parallel passages).

Saint John Paul II explains: "*The word abba is taken from the vocabulary of family life and speaks of the personal communion between father and son, between the son who loves the father and is in turn loved by him. Only one who regarded himself as Son of God in the proper sense could have spoken thus of him and to him as Father: 'Abba,' or 'my Father,' 'Daddy,' 'Papa.'*" (St. John Paul II, Address, 1 July 1987, no. 3).

Jesus, the Son of God who became flesh for our salvation, comes to us so that we can turn towards the Father and address Him as the Father of our souls and the Father of our lives.

Jesus reveals the Father, and in His revelation, He distinguishes between "my Father" and "your Father" (See Jn 20:17). This shows that Jesus' relationship with God the Father is unique. In His personal prayer, he never addresses His Father as "Our" Father, but when he taught us how to pray, He said: "*This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name*" (Mt 6: 9).

Jesus wants to make us aware of our condition as children of God, sons and daughters, indicating the difference between His natural filiation and our divine filiation by adoption, received as a gift.

The Lord's prayer is the prayer of God's children, of those who were adopted by God in Christ. We are sons and daughters, not slaves. We receive the grace of adoption, and now we enjoy the grace of being part of the family.

If we are God's children, we must stop acting as slaves. We should address God with the tenderness, confidence, and love of children. In his letter to the Galatians, Saint Paul teaches that we must direct our hearts to God with affection and call Him: **Abba, Papa:** *"Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father!'"* (Gal 4:6).

In the Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul reaffirms this idea: *"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"* (Rom 8:15-17).

2. The awareness of our divine filiation by adoption must be the foundation of our spiritual life.

By loving us as His children, God invites us to develop familiarity and confidence with Him. This familiarity and trust must be rooted in these convictions:

a. Our Heavenly Father loves us.

And He loves us so much that He gave us His Beloved Son, Jesus. (See John 3:16). And His love is so intense that to prove His love for us, He asked His Son to die for us on the Cross. That is what we learn from Jesus' prayer in the Garden: *"Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Take this cup away from me, but not what I will but what you will"* (Mk 14:36).

b. Our Heavenly Father will never leave us.

How could He leave us? If God leaves us, we cease to exist. Saint Paul taught the Athenians at the Areopagus: *"In him we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28). God does not leave us, but it is the other way around: We abandon Him, thinking that we would be better off without Him, when we claim independence from Him to become slaves of our own passions. And still the Good Father in Heaven remains faithful to his fatherhood: *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5).

c. Our Heavenly Father waits for us.

As the father of the prodigal son who saw him in the distance returning home, He is ready to run towards us, throw his arms around us and fill us with kisses (Lk 15:20). Saint John Paul II explains this moving image: *"The father had certainly not forgotten his son, indeed he had kept unchanged his affection and esteem for him. So he had always waited for him, and now he embraces him"* (St. John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 5)

d. Our Heavenly Father will always protect us.

Can a father hurt his child? Would a father hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or give him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? As difficult as it may be, even if an earthly father were to do so, God the Father will never hurt us and will always protect us, even

from ourselves. He provides for us at all times at every moment. Even when he must discipline us, He introduces pain with love and for our greatest good (Proverbs 3:12). Our Heavenly Father is also the Divine Doctor who produces some cuts and wounds, but this is not because He wants to hurt us. It is because He wants to heal us.

e. Our Heavenly Father will always give us what we need.

And what do we need? We need what Jesus taught us to ask: We need to recognize ourselves as children of God the Father. We need a great desire to live in the Father's house: heaven. We need to welcome His plan of salvation for us, that is his will. We need food for our bodies, and we also need spiritual food. We especially need the Eucharist. We need to forgive and find forgiveness. We need strength so that we do not fall into temptation. And we need to be protected from the evil one. And we need to ask with confidence, knowing that Jesus told us: "*Ask and you will receive.*"

We will never be orphans, we will never be alone, we will never be abandoned, because we always have the gentle care, and great love of our Heavenly Father, who cares for us, and provides for us, and loves us, and offers to us more than the moon, because He offers us Heaven itself and for all eternity!