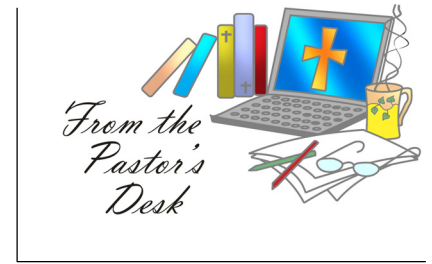


My Dear Friends in Christ,

Meditations on the "Our Father"... Part Seven

"Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed by Thy name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen."



When we wish to understand the depth of the word "father" in this prayer given to us by Jesus, many thoughts are brought to mind. A father is defined as *a man who is a parent* (a man who is the parent of a human being), *a man acting as a parent* (a man who brings up and looks after a child as if he were its father), *a man who is an ancestor* (a man who is an ancestor, especially the founder of a family or people), *a man who is a founder* (a man who establishes, founds, or originates something), *a prototype* (something that is an original version of something else), and *a man who is a leader* (a man who is a community or civic leader), among others that might come to your own mind. All these definitions and explanations supplied by the Encarta Dictionary, are a great stepping stone to understanding "father," and yet, at the same time, are quite limiting. The Encarta Dictionary begins each possible definition of "father" with the phrase "a man who..." or "a human male who." The dictionary has succeeded in describing what a human father is. But, we cannot limit our understanding or the reality of what and who God as Father is to this definition, because this definition would diminish God to the purely human state as well as be a disservice and insult to women and womanhood.

Although, The Son of God, the Second Person in the Most Holy Trinity, Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ born of a woman, chose the words "Our Father" and gave them to us as a form of prayer, it was not His intention to limit our understanding of God simply to father or human male. So the challenge we face is, what *did* Jesus mean and how can the designation of human father be a starting point for us to delve the mind of God?

Let us go back to the definitions provided by Encarta... *a parent, acting as a parent, an ancestor especially the founder of a family or people, one who establishes, founds or originates something, an original version of something else.* In not concentrating on the human male aspect of the definition, these descriptions of father truly can lead us to a deeper understanding of God as Our Father. God as our parent. God acting as our parent. God as the founder of people. God as the one who established, founded and originated everything. God as the original version from which all else stems from.

"In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw how good the light was. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." Thus evening came, and morning followed--the first day. Then God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other." And so it happened: God made the dome, and it separated the water above the dome from the water below it. God called the dome "the sky." Evening came, and morning followed--the second day. Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear." And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared. God called the dry land "the earth," and the basin of the water he called "the sea." God saw how good it was. Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it." And so it happened: the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw how good it was. Evening came, and morning followed--the third day. Then God said: "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. Let them mark the fixed times, the days and the years, and serve as luminaries in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth." And so it happened: God made the two great lights, the greater one to govern the day, and the lesser one to govern the night; and he made the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was. Evening came, and morning followed--the fourth day. Then God said, "Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky." And so it happened: God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of swimming creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw how good it was, and God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth." Evening came, and morning followed--the fifth day. Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth all kinds of living creatures: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals of all kinds." And so it happened: God made all kinds of wild animals, all kinds of cattle, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. God saw how good it was. Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground." God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth." God also said: "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants for food." And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good." (Genesis 1:1-31) God love you... Father Fernan