

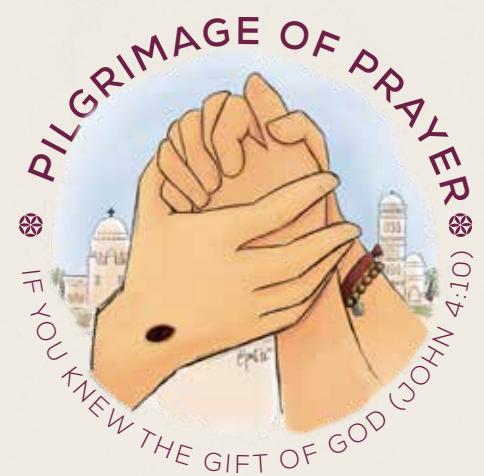
Day 37

We Dare to Say Our Father

For Personal Reflection & Prayer

- How do I experience God as my father?
- Identify what false images of ‘father’ my heart needs to be ‘cleansed of’ (paternal or maternal images from my personal and cultural history) when praying ‘Our Father’.

Take these considerations to the Lord in prayer, asking for light and strength.



Offer a prayer inspired by the words of Scripture:

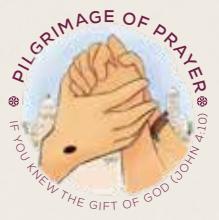
*Do not come near;
Put off your shoes from your feet
For the place on which you are standing
Is holy ground.*

Exodus 3:5

Papal Audience on Vocal Prayer

In his reflection on the Our Father Pope Benedict begins with a quotation which says: “The Our Father begins with a great consolation: we are allowed to say “Father”. This one word contains the whole history of redemption. We are allowed to say “Father” because the Son was our brother and has revealed the Father to us; because, thanks to what Christ has done, we have become once more the children of God.

The problem for very many people today is that their experience of fatherhood is in many cases either completely absent or obscured by inadequate examples of fatherhood. We must therefore allow Jesus to teach us what father really means. For Jesus, father is the



source of all good, the measure of perfection of all people. “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good” The love that the father has for us and endures to the end. Christ fulfilled that love on the Cross by praying for his enemies. We call God “father” because he is the source of all love, and in the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus invites us to become children of this all-loving Father.

We should reflect on the parts of the New Testament where Jesus elaborates on the Fathers love and generosity. “If you, then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” “If you then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” The gift that God gives us is the gift of himself, and this means that prayer is really a recognition of this truth. God’s gift of himself to us is the “one thing necessary” Prayer is a way of gradually purifying and correcting our wishes and of slowly coming to realize what we really need: God and his Spirit.

How do we recognize the Father whose love and presence with us is the “one thing necessary”? Pope Benedict sees the answer in the person of Jesus Christ who is the mirror and the perfect image of the Father, for Jesus tells Philip, “To see me is to see the Father.” When we call God our Father, we recognize that he is our Creator, but also in the person of Jesus our Redeemer too. This is because Jesus is the image of God, of one substance with the Father, the “new Adam”.

The Pope concludes that to be able to call God our Father is a summons to us: to live as a child of God, as a son or daughter. The word father is an invitation to live in awareness that we are children of God. It also frees us from the delusion of false emancipation from all guidance in the living of our lives. Adam believed that in eating the forbidden fruit he and Eve would become “as gods”, and hence be able to live their lives free from the need for God. Through calling God our Father we see not a dependency on God, but rather a relationship of love that sustains our existence and gives it meaning and grandeur.

<https://www.tullamoreparish.ie/component/content/article/41/1215-pope-benedicts-reflections-on-the-our-father>

