

**OUR FATHER**

**The, “Our Father”, is known as the greatest prayer of the church, mainly because Jesus gave it to us, as we learned in our gospel today. But it is in the first two words, “Our Father”, that we find the entire context for our faith, for our life. These two words lead us to the meaning and purpose of our lives. If we are alive and believe that there is God, then we have two very simple questions for our lives that are in our heart, as a condition of our existence; Why am I here? And, What does He want of me? Jesus telling us to address His Father as, “Our Father” gives us the answer to both of these questions. God created us so that He could love us, as a good Father loves His children. Jesus didn’t say, “my Father”, He said, “Our Father”. “Our”, a simple adjective, but the most important word in all of scripture. It is possessive in that we call God the Father, “ours”. He is your Father, my Father. The purpose,**

**of Jesus, His Incarnation, His life and crucifixion, all of scripture, the church, is to teach all of mankind that we were created to be loved by God, as His children, and that we are to call Him Father. The words, “Our Father” are our call to a relationship with God. An intimate personal relationship, as a child to his/her Father.**

**The Pharisees and the leaders, of the Jewish faith in Jesus’ time, were teaching the people that God was to be feared, that they had to obey the laws so that God would love them. Their Faith had become rules and laws, and as a result, the people, were being led away from the love of God. They missed the message.**

**Haven’t, we too, believed that we must earn Gods love, by obeying the rules and not sinning? How many of our parishioners sitting in these very pews on Sunday understand their Faith this way? Yes we have been taught that God loves us. However there has always been an, if, but, or maybe, a condition that has been connected to our behavior, our sinfulness. Thus our image of God can become not one of a loving Father, but of authority and ultimate power.**

**From Romans 8:15, “you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, Abba, Father!”**

**Earning God’s love is an impossible task. On our own effort we can never measure up, an effort that has caused many to walk away. But God is not asking us to earn His love. He is simply asking us to accept His love, His offer of a relationship with us. We spend time in that relationship, as we do in any other meaningful relationship, we live it everyday. We will over time, order our lives because of this relationship, because of God’s love for us, and our love for God.**

**We all have an understanding of what the word Father means. Many of us have had fathers who came close, or exceeded our expectations of a good father; others have had fathers who have fallen short. In either case we know the meaning of the word father, and all the adjectives that describe it. It is this meaning that finds its truth in, “Our Father God”. What father wants his children to fear him? Why would God, our Father, want to be feared? The**

**image of God as loving Father is the foundation of the Old and New Testaments, of all that Jesus taught, the church, all of creation, our very existence. How could this very basic understanding been missed by so many.**

**If one believes in God why would he not pursue God, understanding, wisdom? One might say I can't be holy, I can't be perfect. Perfect is above everyone I know's pay grade. You don't have to be perfect to be holy. Some want to do just enough to get into heaven but not any more, they don't want their faith to cost too much.**

**God calls us to a relationship first. As we live in that relationship, we grow, we read, we pray, we receive the sacraments, we give ourselves, today. Then we wake up tomorrow and do the same, this is our spiritual journey. In time the things that are of God, that lead us to Him, that improve our relationship to Him, simply become more important to us than those things in our lives that do not. It is a process; it requires a decision everyday for the rest of your life. God has to become truly important to us.**

**So what is your image of God our Father? Many today are leaving their faith, many who believe in God practice no faith. In the words of a famous song, they are, “looking for love in all the wrong places”. Their image of God has to be something other than that of a loving Father.**