

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Abba, Father! Dear Dad!

Several weeks ago, we discussed formal prayers – in particular, the Our Father. Why did Jesus choose this image to refer to our Lord? There are many reasons, but let's focus on just a couple of them. A good father gives and preserves the life of his children, he leads his family toward holiness, and above all, he loves them.

God our Father does all of these things well. First of all, as I mentioned in last week's column, God is the Author of all Creation, the Author of all life. It is only because of God that we have life. Our parents cooperated with the life-giving grace of God, in order to bring us into existence, but if it were not God's will that we should live, then we would not have come to be. Next, in several places in Scripture we are called to reach for holiness, just as our Father is holy. [See *Lev 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7; Matt 5:48* and *1 Pet 1:15-16.*] Our Father gave us the rules by which to live, in the Ten Commandments and the rest of Scripture. Through His Son Jesus, He showed us how to live out those commands. Finally, we see, especially through the words of Christ, how much our Father loves us: "Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." [*Matt 10:29-31*] and "Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him." [*John 14:21*]

Our example of a good father, though, does not end with Our Heavenly Father, but we can also see these same qualities of a good father in the patron of all fathers, St. Joseph. While it is true that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus, he was absolutely instrumental in Jesus' birth and the protection and preservation of his family after Jesus' birth. We see in both Matthew and Luke's Gospels that it was Joseph who obtained a proper and safe (although humble) place for Jesus to be born. [*Matt 1:18-25* and *Lk 2:1-7*] He also protected his family from Herod's jealous wrath. [*Matt 2:13-18*] Both our Scripture and our Tradition tell us that Joseph was instrumental in Jesus learning his faith. [*Lk 2:21-24, 41-42*] It was Joseph's love for his family and for God that kept his family together, protected and faithful.

Now it is true that our own fathers may not be as holy as our Heavenly Father or as saintly as St. Joseph [just as our mothers are not the Blessed Virgin Mary], but I know that there are many men who are certainly doing their best to protect their family, lead them in their faith and, more than anything else, love them the best way they know how.

I feel truly blessed to have known the love and care of a good father, and I pray that he is aware of my love and gratitude for all he has done for and meant to me. I pray also for you that you know a father (or father figure) who loves you, that those who have been hurt by the human weakness of their father find reconciliation, and that those whose fathers are not available find a way to re-connect. Please pray for all fathers!

