

## Why do we call him Father?

When did you last see a newborn baby with it's adoring parents?

This week we heard a ring at the doorbell and had a surprise visit from our niece and her husband who have recently married and now have a beautiful daughter. During the evening both Thelma and I had an opportunity to hold the baby but the child was happiest in the embrace of her parents, suckling at her mother's breast and when we went for a short walk on the field snuggling against her father's chest.

When Jesus wanted to introduce his followers to God, he had a wide choice of names from the Old Testament Scriptures including The Almighty, The Most High, The Everlasting One, The Lord of Hosts, The Creator. But Jesus chose to use the simple name Father, or Heavenly Father. In saying "Our Father" Jesus wanted his followers to call to mind the familiar picture of the close intimate bond between loving parents and their children. Jesus even used the intimate Aramaic word "abba" which is similar to our word "daddy" or "papa".

Calling God Father reminds us of 3 things:

### Our Father's deep love

The most obvious thing about our niece and her husband was their deep love for their newborn daughter. But the Bible claims that God's love for us exceeds that of the most loving human parent. "Can a mother forget her nursing child? Even if that were possible I will not forget you!" says the Lord. "See I have written your name on the palms of my hands." Isaiah 49:15 The life and death of Jesus is a clear demonstration of God's deep love for us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son..." John 3:16

### Our Father is close by

We have two sons. One lives in Brussels - Belgium, the other lives in Australia. Even so, it is amazing how quickly we can get in contact with each other through FaceTime, telephone or email. Some of you may be fortunate enough to have family living very close. But our Heavenly Father is even closer to us than our dearest friend or nearest relative. He watches over us and holds us in his arms. "He is not far from any one of us for in Him we live and move and exist." Acts 17:27

## Our Father gives good gifts

In today's gospel Jesus talks about earthly fathers giving good gifts to their children and this is even more true of our Heavenly Father. He never gives bad gifts. I have come across people who do not believe in God, yet when bad things happen who do they blame? You've guessed it - God! We should never fall into the trap of blaming God. James wrote "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father who does not change or turn like shadows." Our Heavenly Father doesn't give good gifts one day, then bad gifts the next. He is constant in his goodness and faithful in his love towards us.

*"Great is your faithfulness O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with you"*

And so Jesus introduces us to the perfect Father, who loves us deeply, is always close beside us and who constantly gives us good gifts. **How can we remain passive to this extraordinary love?** One verse in today's gospel is packed with verbs. Verbs which require action! Verbs which urge us to be in contact with our Heavenly Father every day. Ask... Search... Knock...

### ASK

We can ask for material things and Jesus does suggest "Give us this day our daily bread," but notice that Jesus moves on to spiritual gifts: "your Heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those that ask him." Our Father in heaven is the generous giver of faith, wisdom, hope, love and peace; how many of us do not need much more of all these? What do you need most this morning?

### SEARCH

When we spend time with our Heavenly Father it is often a time of soul searching: searching for solutions to the problems of life, searching for fresh vision for the future, often searching our own hearts where we need to change. This searching will mean spending longer in the presence of our Father, but the promise of Jesus is "Search and you will find!"

### KNOCK

We have a notice on our front door that says "Press the bell firmly and knock loudly several times." We want our visitors to be persistent so that we can welcome them in! Our Heavenly Father wants us to be equally persistent in our relationship with Him. The NLT translates these verses "Keep on asking and you will receive, keep on searching and you will find, keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you." Luke 11:9 Keep on keeping on!

This morning, let us purpose in our hearts to be more active in moving closer to our Heavenly Father.

*Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist  
Without the knowledge of your parenthood and your loving care.  
But now I am your child, I am adopted in your family,  
And I can never be alone,  
'Cause Father God, you're there beside me.*

*I will sing your praises,  
I will sing your praises,  
I will sing your praises,  
Forever more.  
I will sing your praises,  
I will sing your praises,  
I will sing your praises,  
Forever more.*