



The following is from the book: *As I Have Loved You* by Rev. Father John Kearney, C.S.Sp. [Imprimatur: 1941] This entire book, and a number of other books by Father John Kearney, are now available on MP3 files, and can be listened to at the AUDIO tab.

### *Chapter III*

## **GOD OUR FATHER**

### *Introduction: The Certainty of Faith*

By Faith we believe all the truths that God has revealed. To believe (to make an act of Faith) means to accept absolutely and to cling firmly without any deliberate doubt to all the statements that God has made.

In our act of Faith we stand firmly by these statements, not because we see their truth, or can prove them, or can fully understand them, but because God has said they are true; in other words, because of the authority and the truth of God Who has revealed them.

We accept absolutely therefore and we will always accept and stand by what Our Lord has told us about His heavenly Father, about Himself and about the Holy Spirit.

This absolutely certain knowledge of God should be kept in our heart and be pondered over all through our life, because from it flows our love for God.

By this act of Faith in what God has revealed we give great honor and glory to God, we pay Him the homage of our intellect, and we fulfill the first condition for being admitted into His friendship even here below, and into His happiness in the next life.

The great revelation Our Lord made about His heavenly Father was His astounding teaching that *His Father is also a Father to us*, His poor limited human children. The day on which, by God's grace, we bring this truth home to ourselves is a marked day in our spiritual life. For, from that day the very name "father" teaches us, in that one word, both the fact and the nature of God's love for man.

When we consider in detail Our Lord's teaching on this doctrine—it is as absolutely true as He is true—God as Our Father comes before us as supremely lovable, as supremely attractive to our human heart. To yield to this attraction is to love God. "Let us love God because God first hath loved us."

To yield to the supreme attractiveness of God means to value His friendship beyond all price not because of any advantage we expect, but just because He is lovable for His own sake. It means to put His will (which is the same thing as Himself) first in our heart—to do His will in all our activities ; it means to take interest in our Father's interests, v.g., in the salvation of souls for which He gave His beloved Son. All this is simply what any good child would do when he keenly realizes the loving care of his earthly father for him.

To enkindle this flame of love we must strive to realize more and more clearly the fact of God's fatherly love. This we shall try to do by considering all our loving Saviour has done and said to impress on our souls the simple truth, the profound and encouraging and captivating truth, that **GOD IS REALLY OUR FATHER.**

*Blessed be God Who has revealed His Fatherhood to us, His creatures!*

## THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

“*This is Eternal Life that they may know Thee, the only True God.*” John xvii, 3.

Christ came to redeem us by His Life, His Passion and His Death, but also to instruct us on the way to eternal life.

In the sublime prayer addressed to His heavenly Father the night before His Passion, when the greater part of His instructions was already given to the world, Our Saviour summed up these instructions when He reminded us that the great object of them all was the knowledge of God, which would lead us to life everlasting. “This is eternal life,” He said, “that they may know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

Christ, therefore, came to teach us about God, to reveal God to us, for to know God better leads us to love Him more perfectly—it is eternal life.

God is known to man through man’s reason. The order of nature and the laws of nature speak of the existence of an intelligent first cause.

But by his reason man can know something more about God than His mere existence.

To some extent the very nature of God is known to man from God’s creatures: creation is a reflection of the perfections of the Creator.

From the immensity of the universe we get some faint idea of the immensity of God—God Who is present everywhere. And the thought, if closely considered, overwhelms us.

From the work of the creation and the complexity of the government of all things, we get a faint idea of the power of God. And the thought simply brings us to silence.

From the passing of time we get a dim idea of the eternity of God, and the very thought is beyond expression.

We know, of course, that it is impossible for finite minds to understand God, but good men are somehow drawn to think of Him and look up to Him. Our reason tells us of His absolute perfection and yet, because He is so much above us, our ideas of Him, got by reason, are and must be vague.

*But revelation came to the aid of reason* and God Himself gave us a more perfect knowledge of His Divine Nature. That revelation was given by degrees.

## § II

### GOD KNOWN AS OUR CREATOR AND OUR RULER

Before Our Lord’s time the Chosen People knew God *by revelation*, but their knowledge was incomplete. They knew that God was good, but His goodness was rather that of a merciful ruler or kind master and the relation of a servant to a good master expresses the fundamental sentiment of the religious Israelite. Psalm 122 expresses this view of God:

“To thee have I lifted up my eyes who dwellest in heaven.

Behold, as the eyes of the servant are on the hands of the master, as the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of the mistress: so are our eyes unto the Lord Our God until he have mercy on us.”

This passage is typical of the many passages in the Old Testament, which express the fundamental relation of the creature to the Creator.

It is true that the sublime revelation of God as our Father was *foreshadowed* here and there in the Old Testament. But most frequently the paternity of God is there presented under its judicial and national aspect. Father is equivalent to King or Master: paternity implies paternal power rather than paternal love.

Thus, for instance, God spoke by the Prophet Malachy: “A son honoureth a father and a servant his master. If I am Father where is my honour? If I am master where is the fear due to me? saith the Lord of armies.”

The same conception of God appears in the Prophet Isaias: “. . . Thou O Lord art Our Father, Our

Redeemer, from everlasting is thy name. . . . O Lord why hast thou hardened our heart, that we should not fear thee? Return for the sake of thy servants, etc.”

And again in the Canticle of David: “And he (David) blessed the Lord before all the multitude and said: Blessed art thou O Lord, the God of Israel, our Father from eternity to eternity.”

Even the Psalms, the highest elevations to God of the hearts of the Chosen People, never give to God the name of father (save in one single verse), and yet it is here above all places that we would expect to find God called father, for the tender devotion of the Psalms is most characteristic.

The instances we have given show us how the Israelite understood the paternity of God in the rare cases in which the word was used. And we can say that the Chosen People seldom used the word “father” in relation to God to express His paternal care and goodness.

### § III

#### GOD KNOWN AS OUR FATHER

All the knowledge of God given in the Old Law was but a preparation for the clear revelation of God as a Father. It is Our Lord Himself Who has taught us that God is to be looked up to, not merely as our Creator and our most generous Master, but as our loving Father.

This word is indeed a marvelous revelation of God. It lifts us up to a different plane of thought. It gives us an absolutely new idea of our Creator. The most merciful of masters may bestow on us his gifts with lavish generosity. A father gives us what is infinitely more precious: he gives life, he supplies what is necessary to sustain and preserve life, he gives constant care, and he gives tender affection. A father gives loving care which is individual; he knows each child, he watches over and cares for each child, and so much so, that his love seems concentrated on each as if that single one were the sole object of his paternal tenderness. The name father brings to the human mind a memory too deep for words, a picture of goodness, tenderness and love proved by generous sacrifice. And this is the picture Our Saviour uses to teach us how the Eternal God looks on His human children.

To reveal God to the poor limited human mind, even when at its best, was surely a most difficult work, a sublime work. Our Saviour *accomplished this in the simplest of ways*. He made God known even to the youngest, to the poorest, to the most ignorant child of Adam : For the relation of father to children is the best known of all relations; it is an experience common to all and one which is remembered all through life.

This whole doctrine is so marvelous that when we sincerely consider our position before God as His adopted sons, we may sometimes find it hard to grasp the reality of our sonship. And yet it is the absolute truth. *We are truly His children*, and hence we must really look to God as our Father. We should pray for this filial spirit. St. John, full of admiration for our position before God Our Father, cries out: “Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called, and *should be the sons of God*.” He contrasts the reality of being sons of God with the mere fact of being called sons. **Footnote in the book:** [We know how this is explained by the Catholic doctrine on the gift of sanctifying grace. This gift, by making us participators of the Divine nature, makes our divine adoption to be a marvelous reality and not a mere name.]

*The Gospel does not put aside the idea of God as our Creator and our Master:* the relation of servant to master is and must remain the fundamental relation of every man to his Creator. Thus Our Lord says referring to the relation of the creature to the Creator:

“For even as a man going into a far country, called *his servants*, and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents,” and so on and after a long time the lord of these *servants* came, and reckoned with them . . . and the *unprofitable servant* cast ye out into exterior darkness.”

In this passage Our Lord speaks of God as a master who keeps a strict account and has a just right to do

so. It could not be otherwise, since He keeps men and all their faculties in existence.

But we should note that Our Saviour, while preserving the necessary idea of God as a master, represents Him as a master of *royal liberality* both in the remission of debts and in paying more than the just wage. This is clear from the parable of the king to whom a servant owed ten thousand talents, and from the parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

Our Lord evidently wishes us to remember always that we are God's creatures. But to the reverence which this idea implies He adds the character of childlike devotion by emphasizing the truth that God is also Our Father.

In the New Testament, the idea of God as a father appears on every page. We would never end if we tried to analyze all the texts. It is the great revelation of God that Our Saviour gave us.

It is most important for all of us to ponder over this wonderful revelation. There are many reasons for this importance. Among others is the fact that in our own spiritual life one of the great dangers is *discouragement* and *depression*. These may arise from the difficulties that oppose our doing the duties of our state in life or from the works given us by obedience and our failure in making them a success. But more often discouragement and depression may arise from our personal failure to advance in the path of childlike submission to God; the weight of our past sins bears us down, especially when contrasted with the favors God has given us; and our resistance to God's grace, together with our inability to rise from our state of imperfection, presses heavily upon us.

In face of difficulty and failure we have *a sure source of strength and consolation* in the thought of God as Our Father. This idea should be very familiar to us, it should be our habitual way of looking at God. This needs meditation on the Gospel, and petition for the special grace needed to grasp thoroughly the doctrine. We must persevere in this until a habit is formed of thus looking at God. This habit is of vital importance. "If our view of God is not uniformly and habitually that of a Father, the very fountains of piety will be corrupted within us. We shall incur the woe of which the prophet speaks; our sweet will be bitter, and our bitter sweet." The doctrine of the fatherhood of God is most clearly and touchingly set forth by Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount where He has enshrined it for ever in the prayer He taught— "Our Father who art in heaven."

The development and consequences of this fundamental and all-consoling truth are found scattered throughout the Gospels. We shall try to summarize them in the following pages by considering the way Our Blessed Lord teaches the doctrine, the various comparisons He uses, the different points of view from which He wishes us to look at this fundamental and far-reaching truth.

In the Sermon on the Mount Our Lord uses the words "Your Father in Heaven" as many as fifteen times.

This doctrine teaches us at once both how God looks upon us and how we should look up to God.

(1) It tells us of the loving care Our Father has for us, and of the childlike trust we should have in Him.

(2) It tells us how He listens to our prayers and how we should turn to Him in petition as children to their father.

(3) It tells us how merciful Our heavenly Father is to those who fall, and how sincere and confident should be our contrition.

We shall examine these three points.

#### §IV

#### HOW GOD OUR FATHER CARES FOR US

In the Gospel Our Lord tells us plainly of the fatherhood of God. He repeats throughout His addresses to the people that God is "Our Father." The phrase "Your Father Who is in Heaven" is the chief burden of His message, and He reveals all that this wonderful relationship means. In doing so, He impresses on us the boundless goodness and unchanging love of Our heavenly Father. He shows that Our heavenly Father

sustains, preserves and watches over us with loving care, and He illustrates this doctrine with most beautiful comparisons which bring home the reality of the title of father which He taught us to give to God. We should note how He takes examples, which are known to all, of God's care for His creatures. Then He emphasizes the fact that Our Father's care for us is far above this we are far more valuable in His eyes than any other earthly beings.

"Behold" He says "the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap . . . your heavenly *Father feedeth* them: are not you of much more value than they?"

And again: "consider the lilies of the field, how they *grow*, they labour not . . . not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as they are.

If the grass of the field, God doth so clothe how much more you, O ye of little faith."

And a little later on, Our Lord repeats the same idea: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your *Father*. But the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not. You are better than many sparrows."

Mark the comparison in each case the birds compared with you, the flowers compared with you, the sparrows compared with you.

*The argument is simple and clear* and based on facts well known to all.

If Our Father feeds the birds and clothes the flowers, if not even the smallest creature can fall to the ground without Our Father, if we are so much more valuable in His eyes, what should we think of the loving care with which He watches over us and sustains us and protects us?

But in spite of the clarity of the argument it is difficult to bring home to ourselves the truth of God's care for us, we are so insignificant before His immensity. At the same time it is most vital for us to grasp this great truth. Once we realize that God does care for us, the trials and sufferings and temptations of life appear in a new and totally different light.

The more intimate care of Our heavenly Father appears in the words by which Our Lord tells us that *Our Father* sees all things and *watches* with fatherly love *to reward the least good act*: especially that which is unknown to men.

(a) "When thou dost alms," He says "let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy heavenly Father who seeth in secret will *repay* thee."

(b) And again: "But when thou shalt pray enter into thy chamber and having shut the door pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret will *repay* thee."

(c) And further: "When thou fastest anoint thy head . . . and the Father who seeth in secret will *repay* thee."

The same is true of all our secret acts of virtue. Our Father therefore sees all things, and watches that He may recompense the least good deed: — even the cup of cold water will not pass without its reward.

To know that God our Father watches so as to reward our secret acts of virtue, brings before us again His care for us, the little creatures of His Hand.

*Practical consequence*—Since Our Father watches over us with far more care than He does over the birds and flowers, we should therefore look up to Him with confidence, and trust ourselves to His fatherly care.

Be not solicitous," says Our Lord in the same Sermon, "what you shall eat or wherewith you shall be clothed. After all these things do the heathens seek. Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things."

Four times in a short instruction we hear Our Lord repeating the warning words "be not solicitous" be not over anxious.

We are not, therefore, to be *absorbed by anxieties* regarding earthly things. No doubt, anxiety regarding needs of this life comes to all and especially to those who have others dependent on them. But amid such anxieties we should not forget the kind Providence of Our heavenly Father, we should not let these

anxieties dominate us and fill us with the solicitude of those who know not His goodness.

And the same is true of the future. We must not be *over solicitous for the future*. It is in His hands and we must never forget that. “Be not solicitous for the morrow,” says Christ. .

“You are more valuable than many sparrows.”

“Fear not therefore.”

And if in the future Our Father permits suffering to cross our path, He knows best. We should trust Him therefore, and, accepting the cross from His hands, say with Christ, “The Chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

We are not the plaything of the blind forces of nature we are in the loving care of Our heavenly Father, and nothing can hurt us but with His permission. Even more, all He permits is designed by Him for His children’s greater sanctification. It is in this childlike confident spirit we should accept all suffering.

And when the supreme trial of *our last hours* in this world comes then especially must we trust absolutely in Our heavenly Father’s goodness, and we should repeat with simple confidence the last words of Our Lord Himself: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

## §V

### GOD OUR FATHER LISTENS TO OUR PRAYERS

Our Blessed Lord, developing still further the picture of God, Our heavenly Father, tells us that Our Father, ever watching over us, is desirous of bestowing His favors, and that *He listens for and hears our least prayer*.

“Ask and you shall receive,” He says, “seek, and you shall find, knock, and it shall be opened to you . . . For what man is there among you of whom, if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone, or if he shall ask a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him.”

Comment on this most clear and most beautiful text is unnecessary.

What a revelation of our God!

The human father, sinner though he be, hears the cry of his child and gives him what he needs. Men understand this, and Our Lord reminds them of it in order to teach them how Our heavenly Father listens to the prayers of His children.

Christ here speaks of the bread which the earthly father gives to his children; later on He tells us of the wondrous bread of Angels which Our heavenly Father has prepared for us:—“My Father,” He says, “giveth you the true bread from Heaven.”

I am the living Bread.”

Our Saviour not merely tells us to ask Our heavenly Father, but He tells us how to ask; He tells us to address God as our Father: “Our Father Who art in Heaven . . . Give us this day our daily bread.”

To think of God as Our Father is daring, but to petition Him as Father is still more so, and hence in Holy Mass before thus addressing Him the Church puts on the lips of her priest these significant words “Instructed by Thy saving precepts and following Thy divine directions, *we presume to say*, Our Father Who art in heaven. . . .”

It is indeed a most special privilege to be permitted to address God thus, and St. Paul reminds us of this special favor saying: “God *has sent* the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying: Abba, Father,” and again, “You *have received* the spirit of adoption whereby we cry: Abba, Father.”

- *Practical consequence*: With childlike confidence, therefore, we must make constant petition to Our Father in heaven, since He knows “how to give good things to them that ask Him.”

Our Lord tells us: “Your heavenly Father knoweth what you need before you ask.” But He desires us to ask Him: “Ask,” He says, “and you shall receive.” This is the order of His Divine Providence. One of the most fatal mistakes we can make in our spiritual life is the neglect of petition. Treasures of graces are

waiting for us in the hands of Our heavenly Father until we petition Him for them. The “Our Father” is a prayer of petition, petition for what concerns the glory of God and petition for what concerns our own salvation.

If God Our Father in His paternal affection sees well to refuse our petition, it is done in love and we must accept it in love, being ever confident (because of Our Lord’s words) that our petitions never fail: they bring our Father’s blessings on us, although these blessings may not come in the way our limited understanding would lead us to desire them.

## § VI GOD OUR FATHER IS READY TO PARDON US

The revelation of God Our Father reaches its climax when Our Saviour speaks of the father of the Prodigal Son. The worthless prodigal had left his home and broken his father’s heart, and yet when he repents and returns, his rejected father being moved with pity *runs to meet him, falls on his neck and kisses him.*

What ineffable words are these: “He fell upon his neck and kissed him!” What tender kindness! What sweet goodness!

And in like manner Our heavenly Father will come to us. He will run to meet us with His grace, and His loving forgiveness can only be described in these words: “He will fall upon our neck and kiss us.”

And Our Lord goes on to say that the joy of the father of the prodigal was shared by the household, that is to say, the joy of Our heavenly Father is shared by the whole court of heaven, whose angelic choirs taste a new happiness in the return of the repentant sinner.

*Practical Consequence:* We must remember all this if we have the misfortune to wander away from Our Father, either away from His friendship, or from the close union He desires to have with us. And our prayer must be the prayer of the prodigal: “My father, I have sinned against thee, I am not worthy to be called thy son.”

Note how the prodigal still calls him father, even when declaring his unworthiness to be called a son.

And knowing the goodness of Our Father we can always have confidence that Our Father will be moved with compassion, that He will come to meet us with the kiss of peace and that there will be joy in heaven because we have returned to the path of perfection, to the narrow way that leads to life.

It is significant of the mind of the Church that, at the very beginning of the Canon of the Mass, when the moment is approaching at which the graces of Calvary will be poured forth richly, the Church addresses Our Father in heaven as “*Most clement Father*”: “Clementissime Pater.” Clemency is the tendency to mitigate punishment as far as possible. And this is one of the characteristics of Our heavenly Father.

For us sinners it is of absolute necessity that, while recognizing our sinfulness, we *do not let ourselves be overwhelmed by it*; but, on the contrary, in spite of it, we keep our souls in tranquil confidence, while we try to spend ourselves in doing what pleases God.

All this we can do best by cultivating the spirit of childlike and absolute trust in God Our Father. “Out of this filial feeling towards Our heavenly Father comes ease of conscience as to past sin. We can trust Him, in sweet confidence, even with the unutterable decision of our eternal doom. We enjoy liberty of spirit in indifferent actions, mingled with an intense desire to serve Him which our filial love inspires. Out of it come also a sweet forgetfulness of self, enjoyment in prayer, patience in doubts, calmness in difficulties, light-heartedness in trials, and an uncomplaining contentment in desolation. We worship Him for His own blessed sake, because He is Our most dear Father. Happy sunshine of this thought; it falls upon our souls with triple beam, more trust in God, more freedom with God, more generosity with God! No wonder St. Thérèse could say, with tears in her eyes, “It is so sweet to call God Our Father.”

## VII IMPORTANCE OF THE FILIAL SPIRIT

The details we have been considering put before us a marvelous picture!

God Our Father, Who cares for us, Who gives us life, sustains us and watches over us to protect and to reward; God Our Father, Whose loving ear is ever attentive to our whispered prayer; God Our Father, Who is ready to fall on the neck of the repentant prodigal.

And all is so simple, so clear, so telling.

NOTE.—The teaching of the Scripture on the fatherhood of God is full, rich and impressive; we must ponder on it. And while doing so, we must ever keep in mind that the texts we have examined and which all develop the same truth, are the very words of the Holy Ghost. They are absolutely and infallibly true, and *the consoling truth* they teach of the fatherhood of God is therefore *a truth of Faith*, like the doctrine of the Holy Trinity or the doctrine of the Real Presence.

### **Blessed be God for this!**

It is evidently of the most vital importance for all of us to *have the habit* of looking up to God as our Father: looking up to Him with filial confidence in His protection; praying to Him with filial assurance that He will hear us; returning to Him with filial trust in His mercy, when we have wandered—in a word, really considering God as Our Father.

The importance of this filial spirit will be manifest when we recall that, *to have hard, critical and unfilial views of God is one of the sins of our time.*

Some, good people even, would seem to forget the glorious revelation of the fatherhood of God, and to be still in the twilight of the Old Law, when God was considered and known *only* as a King or a Master.

Those who habitually look thus upon God only *create difficulties for themselves*: difficulties regarding the mysteries that necessarily surround us now, and difficulties regarding the future.

These difficulties in great measure disappear once we have learned to look up to God as Our Father, and trust in His fatherly goodness: “Unless you become as little children,” says Our Lord, “you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Consider this example: A child going out on a moonlight night is afraid of the shadows. But he puts his hand in that of his father and goes forth with confidence. He does well. No explanation of laws of light or of the shadows is given to him: he would not understand. He trusts his father. He still sees the shadows and they still excite fear, but he is no longer overcome by the fear. He knows his father is taking care of him. All explanations would be wasted on him in face of the simple fact of his father’s care. In this he is more reasonable and wise than many an adult.

And we also, in like manner, must trust Our heavenly Father. Our Father has given us ample proofs of His love, especially in sending His Son: “God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son.”

God does not reveal all mysteries to us: our finite minds could not grasp all, and our essential position as creatures demands our dependence on Him in the higher part of our souls by faith and confidence. He asks us to trust Him for the things that are obscure on account of the things that are clear, on account of His own power and His fatherly goodness—this we should do.

The knowledge of God’s fatherly goodness will grow with the years in those souls who try to cultivate the filial spirit. In time they will understand much more perfectly how true it is that “all that is most tender and most gentle in all paternity on earth is but the merest shadow of the boundless sweetness and affectionateness of His paternity in heaven. The beauty and consolation of this idea surpass words. It destroys the sense of the loneliness in the world, and puts a new color on chastisement and affliction. It calls consolation out of the very sense of weakness, enables us to trust God for the problems we cannot solve, and binds us by a sense of most dear relationship to all our fellow-men. The idea enters into and



becomes the master thought of all our spiritual actions.”

NOTE.—Our holy Faith teaches us that the Three Divine Persons, while being really distinct, are absolutely equal in every way. From this truth it follows that when Our Lord describes His heavenly Father *He is describing Himself*; when He puts before us His Father’s care for us, His watchfulness, His desire to reward, His attention to our prayer, and His mercy for the repentant sinner, Jesus is *giving us an account of Himself as God* in all His lovable attributes. These are reflected in His human nature and manifested in His life on earth

## § VIII OUR FATHER’S HOME

The knowledge of God as Our Father is given to us by Our Lord to lead us along the way of childhood, so that we will reach in security Our Father’s eternal home. Hence He said: “*This is eternal life*, that they may know thee, the only true God” (Our Father in heaven) “and him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ” (Our Saviour and Our Lover).

Hence our filial spirit should lead us *to recall frequently* the eternal home of heaven.

Our Blessed Lord continually associates the eternal reward that awaits us, with the name of Our Father. *Heaven is the Kingdom of Our Father.*

At the general judgment, Christ shall say, “Come ye blessed of my Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you.” And in another place, looking forward to heaven, He says: “The just shall shine like the sun in the Kingdom of my Father.” And again He tells us that even now the angels that guard us see the face of the Father Who is in heaven. A further idea is put before us when Christ teaches that heaven is the house, *the home of Our Father.* “In My Father’s house there are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place for you.” Heaven is our home, and in our home there are many degrees of happiness. There is a place for everyone.

Our Blessed Saviour associates heaven with the name of Father, that we may realize the loving desire of Our Father to have us His children with Him in His kingdom. Thus He says: “It is not the Will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” He wants all to be with Him in the home of heaven. We have heard Him describing the desire of the father of the prodigal that his son should come home to him, a desire so great, that when the wanderer returned the father ran to meet him and fell upon his neck and kissed him: it is the desire of God to have even the sinner in His kingdom, that He may pour His blessings upon Him.

Our Saviour, in associating heaven with the name of Father, also wishes us to realize the *sweetness of the life of love* that awaits us in heaven, so that we may desire heaven, that we may desire to be with God Our Father, and that we may strive to be pleasing to Our Father: “He that doth the will of my Father in heaven, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven.”

It is most natural (to speak in a human way) for Our Lord to associate the name of Our Father with the kingdom of Heaven, for the first great fact in the revelation of the kindness of God, was *His opening to men the gates of the Eternal Kingdom.* This fact reveals God as supremely lovable. He might have given to men the possibility of attaining to a high degree of happiness in the natural order, a degree far above all that they could dream of. But God did not stop at the natural order of bliss. He would give to man, in His infinite generosity, the power to become His child by adoption, and to be heir to His Kingdom of endless happiness. It is as if He said: My human creatures are so dear to Me that they shall have the possibility of partaking in My own happiness, My kingdom of bliss shall be open to them, they can enter into this eternal happiness *if they only wish it*, if they really wish to be My friends.

This revelation of kindness, generosity and desire for the happiness of men shows us God in a clear light as most lovable, as infinitely lovable—all in God is infinite—He is our Great Lover.

## CONCLUSION: GRATITUDE AND LOVE

Looking back over the doctrine of God's fatherhood, *how grateful* we should be to Our Lord for this most sweet revelation of God as Our Father. So much is contained in this one word! It teaches us how God looks on us, and it teaches us how we should look up to God.

Our Blessed Lord as Man had a most intense devotion to His heavenly Father. He was always speaking of Him, of His goodness, of His Holy Will, of His kingdom. And He desires us to learn of Him this simple filial devotion to Our heavenly Father. And we should note, and it is very remarkable, that when He had completed His instructions and revealed His own devotion to His heavenly Father, He even placed Himself beside us in this devotion, saying "I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God."

St. Paul expresses the thoughts that well up in the hearts of all who ponder over this doctrine, when he says: "Blessed be God the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the *Father of Mercies* and *the God of all consolation*, who consoleth us in all our tribulations."

"The Father of Mercies!" What an inexhaustible source of joy and sweetness, of comfort and consolation we have in the thought of God as Our Father, a treasure that, alas, some seem to forget!

We must make this thought familiar. And to do that we must pray for the grace needed and take every means to acquire the habit of looking up to God as Our Father.

Let us encourage ourselves to make the necessary effort to acquire this habit by recalling the marked care Christ took to teach us this truth in every page of the Gospel.

"The contemplation of spiritual beauty and goodness," says St. Thomas, "is the beginning of spiritual love." The supreme beauty is God Himself, and the contemplation of the fatherhood of God will inevitably lead sincere souls to yield to the attraction of the supreme and unchanging goodness of Our Father, to place Him first in their esteem and in their hearts, far above all earthly attractive things. This is to love Him just because of what Our Lord has revealed of His Father's affection for men. And thus the First Commandment will be fulfilled.

Let us love God, because God first hath loved us.

## PRAYER

O Father of mercies, O God of all consolation, Who hast revealed to us, by Thine only-begotten Son, the reality and the sweetness of Thy fatherly love: we Thy children beseech Thee to grant unto us such abundance of heavenly grace, that ever keeping in mind Thy fatherly kindness and generosity and mercy, we may always live as Thy grateful and docile and affectionate children. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen

## GOD OUR FATHER

### *Points for Prayer*

INTRODUCTION: The Certainty of Faith.

§ I. The Knowledge of God.

This is Eternal Life that they may know Thee the only True God.

§ II. God known as Our Creator and Our Ruler. "Behold, as the eyes of a servant."

§ III. God known as Our Father.

Found all through the New Testament.

§ IV. How God Our Father cares for us.

(1) He watches over us with care.

(2) He sees all to reward. We must be confident. “Be not solicitous.”

§ V. God Our Father Listens to our Prayers. We must petition Him with trust and resignation.

§ VI. God Our Father is Ready to Pardon us. We must return with confident contrition.

Sublime Revelation—so simple: “God so loved the world.”

§ VII. Importance of the Filial Spirit. “Unless you become as little children.”

§ VIII. Our Father’s Home.

CONCLUSION: Gratitude and Love



“Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.”

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