

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA Our Father

And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Galatians 4:6

Insight

Julia and Olivia are sisters, three years apart. They love both their parents very much. But as much as they love their mom, Julia and Olivia were clearly "daddy's little girls." Their father loves hearing them call out "Daddy!" upon his return home from his business trips.

It remains to be seen if "daddy's little girls" would remain as affectionate when they become teenagers. He wondered in a few short years would he be asking, "Who took my little girls and replaced them with these hormonal monsters?"

Julia's and Olivia's father smiled ruefully as he watched them play in the backyard. He knew that regardless of what may happen in the coming years their relationship would definitely evolve. He understood that his girls' increasing maturity, influential friends, and boyfriends, would impact their relationship. He began to dread that inevitable moment of meeting the first serious boyfriend.

For Reflection . . .

The Lord's Prayer is the consummate expression of the praying Church.

How has your own father (or perhaps another man) functioned as a father-figure for you?

How do you foresee using the Lord's Prayer, the Our Father, in your prayer life?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2773–2802

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 481–485

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 578–585

Church Teaching

The Lord's Prayer originated with Jesus as a result of the disciples' request, hence its title. Slightly different versions are given in Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4. After the opening address, Matthew's version presents seven petitions while Luke's contains only five. The liturgical tradition of the Church uses the version from the Gospel of Matthew.

Our Communion in Prayer

We do not say "my" Father or "your" Father. We profess and pray, "Our Father." By faith and Baptism, "our" points to that communion into which all Christians belong. "Our Father" expresses the truth that we are the People of God. This is possible because of God's free gift of faith to us in Christ Jesus. In Baptism, we are joined to Christ as a community of believers. Even when individual members of the Church pray the Lord's Prayer alone, they pray belonging to the Body of Christ.

"Father" rightly implies intimacy and closeness. Yet we address God, who is utterly transcendent. We approach this mystery in humility and with awe. Because God is beyond worldly categories, the Revelation of God's Word needs to purify those parental images that arise from personal experiences and cultural milieu.

Abba-Father

Nevertheless, we dare to invoke God as "Father" because Jesus, his Son, reveals him to us as Abba-Father. Employing the term "Father" also reveals *us* to ourselves. We are his sons and daughters, challenged to live up to our baptismal inheritance as the children of God. As his adopted children in Christ, we pray and worship God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit.