

OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN --

These are very familiar words uttered often in the Christian Church -- the beginning of what we call "The Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:9).

I was not raised in a Church atmosphere, but I vividly recall reciting these words in a New Jersey Public School each morning before classes began -- and it left a lasting effect on me all through those 12 years of learning.

However, I did not fully understand what I was being taught or what I was repeating. I could not figure out why I was speaking to "Our Father which art in Heaven" -- after all, I thought, my own father was still living -- not dead -- not in Heaven -- so why should I recite these words.

It took a long time for me to figure out that this "Father" I was praying to was not my physical father, but rather the God of Creation -- the God who made Heaven and earth -- the personal Father God of all who believe and trust in Him.

We take special note this weekend to honor our earthly fathers -- in appreciation for providing all our earthly needs while growing up, and had the responsibility for furthering our lives.

This father we now honor is the one who gave us physical life -- through our mothers -- the one who provided a home and food and met our needs for those years of growth.

Yes, it may be true that some of us did not have the good fortune of having a loving and caring father -- possibly one who neglected his duties that come with fatherhood -- one who possibly mistreated us -- one who did not perform his duties of love and provision.

Yet -- we all can have a very loving and caring Father -- the One who made Heaven and earth -- the One who actually used our earthly father and mother to bring us into this world -- the miracle of birth -- the miracle of a seed and a sperm connecting, creating a life, and forming it over a period of nine months to become the baby, child, teen, and eventually adult.

This "God" -- Our Father -- is the one we really should honor this weekend and every weekend as we attend Church and sing His praises.

This "God" -- is the one we can communicate with whenever we have the desire -- He is always available -- has promised that He "*would never leave us nor forsake us*" (Hebrews 13:5) and loves and cares for us more than we can ever imagine -- He is just a prayer away.

Let us, this weekend, honor both our earthly father and our Heavenly Father and tell them how much we love each of them and are grateful for their provision and care through all the years of our lives. Let us tell them both how much they mean to us.

Recite the "Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:9-13) and mean it from the heart -- think carefully of what you are saying.

Do something special for your physical father -- call him on the phone -- write him an e-mail -- go visit him -- send him a card -- buy him something special -- let him know you care and are thankful for the years of his care.

If you no longer have your father, adopt one who may be lonely. Remember -- grandfathers are fathers also.

Do you personally know your Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ? Are you sure you are a member of His family? Have you surrendered to the God of Heaven and rejoice in the Blessed Assurance that you will spend Eternity with Him? You can! Call on Him right now and ask Him to come into your heart and life and make you His child.

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