

## **God: Father of Humankind**

*(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)*

### **Opening Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name; your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen

### **Scripture**

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”  
*(Luke 1:31-33)*

*(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)*

### **Introduction**

We identify with God as the Father of his only Son Jesus, but we also recognize that we, too, are children of God because God said we are. In the Feast of the Annunciation, God gives himself totally to humanity through the conception of Jesus. Through this program we again see the power of God, the wonder of the Holy Spirit, and the vulnerability of the person of Jesus.

*(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)*

### **Documentary Tradition**

The Christian message of God the Father is one that is found in our most basic creeds. “I believe in God, the Father Almighty”, is a statement that sums up our understanding of God as Father to all of humanity, each one’s own Father. This reality is made present in Jesus’ teaching about the Father as the ultimate source who connects and relates to all aspects of His creation.

First, we can say that God the Father revealed Himself to the Hebrew people through the covenant, and as a nation they recognized him as creator, protector, and guide. From this foundation we see, in the bible, individuals and communities expressing new life because of their relationship with Him. Today, God as the creator continues to sustain all things and guides them through his loving care. We also see God the Father revealed in the New Testament, through Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom. He makes clear that God’s reign has its source in the Father.

“We can adore the Father because he has caused us to be reborn to his life by adopting us as his children in his only Son: by Baptism, he incorporates us into the Body of his Christ; through the anointing of his Spirit who flows from the head to the members, he makes us other ‘Christ.’”  
*(Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2782)*

The fatherhood of God offers us a deep understanding that we can experience both a vocation and an election that is rooted in God, which not only points back to first creation but also points forward in hope to continual re-creation.

*(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)*

## **Discussion Questions**

1. When did you realize that through your baptism you became a member of God's family?
2. When does your parish community express itself as God's family?
3. How has Serra become part of God's family for you?

*(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)*

## **Closing Reflection**

For many Christians, "father", is one of the most familiar and frequently used ways of addressing God in prayer. Many find it to be a meaningful way of expressing the kind of relationship they have with God. Jesus used the term "Abba" to express the special relationship he had with his Father. The intimacy of the Abba relationship was not exclusive; rather, it was a dynamic relationship that still shares the Holy Spirit with His entire creation. In this way, our lives as sons and daughters are more than child-like; it is uniquely responsive to our own capacity to be co-creators in a divine family that is forgiving, healing and inclusive, in the spirit of Our Father.

## **Bibliography**

Pope John Paul II. *Celebrate 2000: Reflection on Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1996.

Pope John Paul II. *Celebrate 2000: God the Father*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1998.

Pope John Paul II. *On the Coming of the Third Millennium (Tertio Millennio Adveniente)*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1994.

Mc Closkey, O.F.M., Pat. *Naming your God, the search for Mature Images*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1991.

Roman Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992 English 1994.

Theological-Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. *God, the Father of Mercy: Official Catechetical Text in Preparation for the Holy Year*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.

## **God: Father of Jesus**

*(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)*

### **Opening Prayer**

Father of Jesus, you gave your only Son to the world so that your complete love could be made real to all of humanity. Be with us as we come to know you, through the life and ministry of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

### **Scripture**

“After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light... Suddenly, a bright cloud covered them with a shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favor. *(Matthew 17:1-3)*

*(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)*

### **Introduction**

We learn from an attentive reading of the Gospels, that Jesus lived and worked in constant reference to His Father. He frequently addressed God with a term of endearment and love—“Abba.” Through this example God is revealed in the fullness of paternity. This program illustrates that in the light of Jesus’ definitive testimony we can know that God’s fatherhood pertains first of all to the mystery of God’s inner life and its mystery of the Trinity.

*(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)*

### **Documentary Tradition**

“The Gospels report that at two solemn moments, the Baptism and Transfiguration of Christ, the voice of the Father designates Jesus as his beloved Son, Jesus calls himself the only Son of God, and by this title affirms his eternal preexistence. He asks for faith in the name of the only Son of God. In the centurion’s exclamation before the crucified Christ, ‘Truly this man was the Son of God,’ Christian confession is already heard. Only in the Paschal mystery can the believer give the title Son of God its full meaning.” *(Catechism of the Catholic Church #444)*

By becoming human in Jesus Christ God communicates with humanity and seeks out every person. Through this searching, God’s love becomes ever more evident in the world. Jesus Christ is the word and image of the Father, and in him, the hidden God is revealed to us. In essence when one encounters God through Jesus, one encounters the Father. Through this relationship, God makes his presence real in the person of Jesus. Jesus offers all humanity a message of hope and love. As God defines himself through the humanity of Jesus, He becomes active as the Father of Christ and our Father.

There are many truths revealed by and in the one living mystery of God.

*(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What does Jesus’ life reveal about God the Father?
2. How has the Church embodied these characteristics?

3. How does your Serra club most express these characteristics?

*(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)*

### **Closing Reflection**

There is no doubt that the New Testament attributes a unique identity to Jesus as God's only son. Faith in this identity is affirmed primarily in the transfiguration. Along with the baptism and the agony in the garden, the transfiguration is the key event in which the Father communes with the Son in a special way about His mission. The description of Jesus' face and clothes and the transfiguration identifies him as a member of the heavenly realm. He continually invites us to engage in becoming like Him, even as He engaged in becoming like us so He could bring us to the Father.

### **Bibliography**

Hughes, Gerard. *God of Surprises*. Boston, MA: Crowley Publications, 1993.

Pope John Paul II. *Celebrate 2000. Reflection on Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Father*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1996.

Pope John Paul II. *Celebrate 2000: God the Father*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1998.

Pope John Paul II. *On the Coming of the Third Millennium (Tertio Millennio Adveniente)*. Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1994.

McCloskey, O.F.M., Pat. *Naming Your God. The Search for Mature Images*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1991.

Roman Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992 (English 1994).

Theological-Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. *God, the Father of Mercy. Official Catechetical Text in Preparation for the Holy Year*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.

## **God: Father of Love**

*(Read the Opening Prayer and Scripture out loud.)*

### **Opening Prayer**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

### **Scripture**

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.

Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit.” (1 John 4:7-13)

*(Take time for silent reflection, then read the Introduction out loud.)*

### **Introduction**

There are passages in scripture through which the inspired authors express the spiritual truth about God’s love by referring to him as the Creator. This spiritual truth in some way always points to the love of God and the need for this love to be expressed in relationship with all that was created, especially humanity. This program makes the connection between God’s love for humanity and our invitation to love one another.

*(Introduce a speaker or the facilitator can read the following paragraphs with pauses in between.)*

### **Documentary Tradition**

God created humanity through love and invites humanity into love. This vocation to love is at the heart of the Church’s attempt to make Jesus’ love real to the world. Furthermore, the abundance of God’s love manifests itself in the redemptive act of Christ’s death and resurrection. By this supreme gift, God is faithful to His eternal plan, and also calls all of us, through the Church, to be reconciled so this love is really evident in our own lives.

“To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom. For this, we must humble ourselves and become little. Even more: to become children of God we must be born from above or born of God. Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this marvelous exchange...” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #526)

Becoming a child to enter the kingdom is necessary to experience the kingdom fully. By becoming childlike (not childish) we are able to place ourselves in complete dependence on God, resulting in the experience of being unconditionally loved for who we are. This fosters in us an attitude of accepting and loving others for who they are in the eyes of God.

*(The facilitator can read the Discussion Questions out loud for general or small group discussion.)*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What do you see in your life that may help or hinder your experience of the love of God and your ability to share it with others?
2. Do you think that your parish thinks of Christmas in terms of birth or celebration of God's love? How is this expressed?
3. Do you experience your Serra Club as one, which is attuned to the love of God and the Second Coming of Christ?

*(If time permits invite the small groups to share with the large group any insights that they gain from the group discussion, then read the Closing Reflection.)*

### **Closing Reflection**

In Pope John Paul II's challenge to reflect on God the Father in 1999, he is very clear that God is the father of love. All Christians are called to be open to this truth and to share it with others. God's love is then made real in the miracle of Christmas, because it causes us to see humanity with very different eyes. It is at this time that we truly realize that in the darkest night and the coldest hours, the warmth and light of a loving God appears through the birth of Jesus. This infuses the Christmas Spirit in us as something to be carried in our hearts throughout the entire year.

### **Bibliography**

Hughes, Gerard. *God of Surprises*. Boston, MA: Crowley Publications, 1993.

Pope John Paul II. *Celebrate 2000: Reflections on Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1996.

Pope John Paul II. *Celebrate 2000: Reflections on God the Father*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1998.

Pope John Paul II. *On the Coming of the Third Millennium (Tertio Millennio Adveniente)*. Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1994.

McCloskey, O.F.M., Pat. *Naming Your God. The Search for Mature Images*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1991.

Roman Catholic Church. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992 (English 1994).

Theological-Historical Commission for the Great Jubilee Year 2000. *God, the Father of Mercy. Official Catechetical Text in Preparation for the Holy Year*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1998.