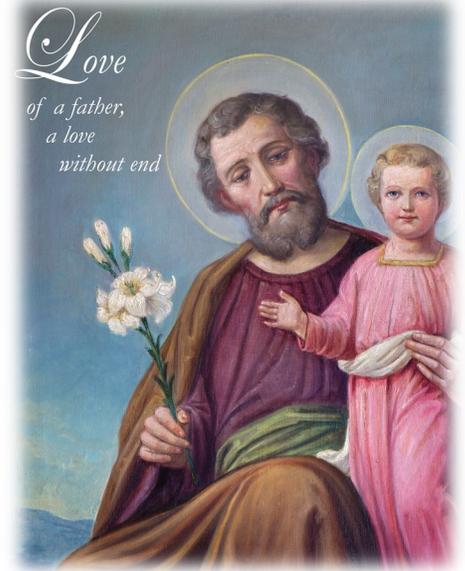


A BLESSED & HAPPY FATHER'S DAY

I send my blessings of a Happy Father's Day to all our fathers. May you be filled with the grace and peace of the Lord today and always. In a particular way, I pray for the eternal rest of all fathers who have gone before us. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Fathers are a great blessing to us all. They offer their lives to their family and loved ones, and as mothers do, they offer self-sacrifice to love and protect their families. One of my life long patrons is Saint Joseph, who, among many other titles, is the patron of fathers and families. I have a great devotion to Saint Joseph as I grew up at Saint Joseph Church in Mount Oliver. Saint Joseph gives us an example of humility, dedication, and self-sacrificial love. He was chosen by our Heavenly Father to care for his Son and the Blessed Mother. The Holy Family shows us how our families, too, can be holy. There is a growing movement for greater devotion to Saint Joseph in our time. I encourage you to examine and consider the devotion of Consecration to Saint Joseph.



I want to reflect on fathers. We have our natural fathers, our spiritual fathers (priests), and God Our Eternal Father in heaven. First, we each have our natural fathers. The one who gives life and the mother receives that life to bring about new life. Remember the Commandment, honor your father and mother. (Ex 20:12) I am so blessed to have my father, whom many of you have met and know. He has been a pillar of faith and an example of Christian life for me, and I am happy to share his many life lessons with you from time to time. Happy Father's Day, I love you, Dad.

Priests are addressed as fathers as well. The title of father comes from Sacred Scripture. The Gospels refer to a number of the Old Testament figures as father, David (Luke 1:32), Abraham (Luke 1:73) Saint Joseph (Luke 2:33, 48), who is both spiritual and foster father. There are many other passages from scripture that refer to spiritual fatherhood. Saint Paul's teachings show us the spiritual fatherhood of the priest when he says, "as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (1 Cor 4:14b-15) Priest through the understanding of spiritual fatherhood presented throughout the Sacred Scriptures are rightly called father, for they give life in the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel and feed their spiritual children through administering the Sacraments of Eternal Life.

Jesus taught his disciples to call God, Our Father (Matt 6:9, Luke 11:2). God, Our Heavenly Father, is the source of all life. He has created all things through His Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. (see Gospel of John 1:1-14, Colossians 1:15-20). It is through Our Heavenly Father that natural and spiritual fathers are able to give life. First, in the natural order, then in the spiritual realm. Our Heavenly Father gives life, and humanity receives that life, "in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors" (CCC 307). Our Father calls fathers both natural and spiritual to a life of self-sacrificial love, just as Jesus Christ His Son showed us on the cross. To be a father is to live and give away the life and love of God. God bless our fathers, and have a Blessed and Happy Father's Day.