

God the Father

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ~ Galatians 4:6

WHO IS GOD THE FATHER? He is the first person of the Blessed Trinity. The term "Blessed Trinity" means that there is one almighty God who exists as three distinct Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Not three gods, but rather one God who exists as three distinct Persons. This is the central mystery of Christianity.

Throughout the Holy Scriptures, God is revealed as the almighty God who is strong and protective of his people, Israel. He commands obedience and holiness of life. Yet he is also tender, compassionate, and forgiving. The Israelites certainly had an awareness of God as their Father who had formed them into a people (see Jer 31:9) and continually cared for them and their needs: *"Make his greatness known there, and exalt him in the presence of all the living; because he is our Lord and God, he is our Father for ever"* (Tb 13:4).

"God is the first and perfect Father, and all other fatherhood finds its ultimate origin in him."

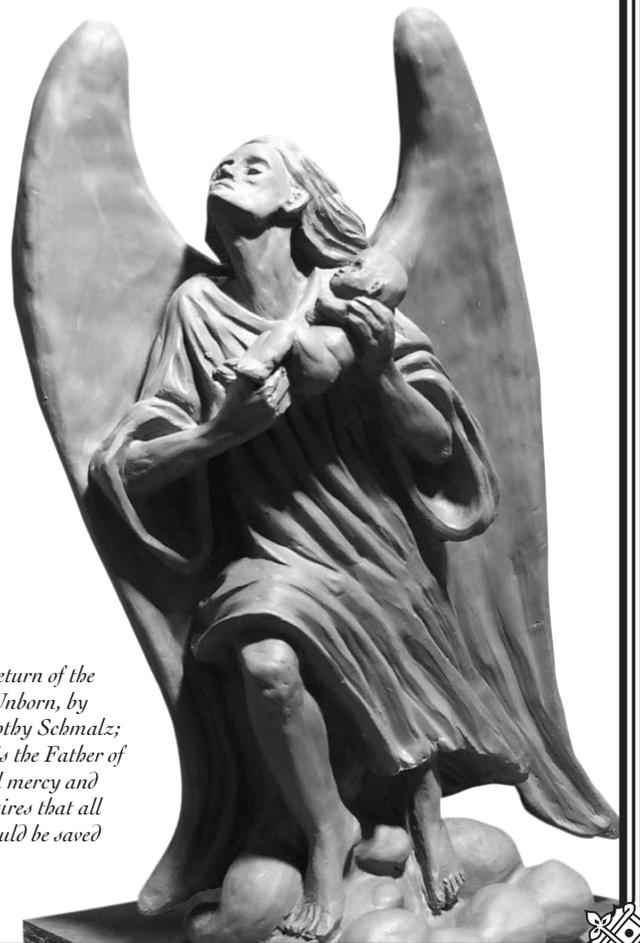
Through the prophet Jeremiah, God expressed his intentions toward Israel: *"I thought how I would set you among my sons, and give you a pleasant land, a heritage most beautiful of all nations. And I thought you would call me, My Father, and would not turn from following me"* (Jer 3:19), yet Israel had to be reminded of his steadfast care: *"Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?"* (Dt 32:6). To David, especially, God was Father (see 2 Sm 7:14-15; Ps 89:26). The prophet Isaiah acknowledged our debt to God's loving creation in a beautiful metaphor: *"O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou art our potter; we are all the work of thy hand"* (Is 64:8), and reminded Israel of God's promise of redemption: *"thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is thy name"* (Is 63:16).

However, it was not until the coming of Christ that the Father was fully revealed. Jesus said, *"He who has seen me has seen the Father"* (Jn 14:9). One of the primary things that Jesus came to do was to reveal God to us. And Jesus reveals that the first per-

son of the Trinity is our loving Father. He is the origin of all that exists and ever will exist. The second person of the Blessed Trinity comes forth from God the Father. He is the Son of God. He took our human nature, and we know him as Jesus. The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Blessed Trinity, comes forth from the Father and the Son. This dynamic action of love within the Trinity has occurred from all eternity and will always continue: there are three Persons, yet one God.

God and the Christian Family

God created human beings the way he did for a particular reason. Adam and Eve were made in the image and likeness of God. God created them as man and woman to reflect what God is like in himself (see Gn 1:27). God is not a man or a woman. As a completely spiritual being, God could not have such distinc-



Return of the Unborn, by Timothy Schmalz; God is the Father of all mercy and desires that all would be saved



“The Father deeply desires our happiness and peace.”

tions. He transcends them. However, human masculinity and femininity do reflect, in a limited way, things that are true of God. This is vitally important. When a man and woman marry and have a child, the fruitful family becomes an image of the Blessed Trinity. In other words, every human family provides a profound reflection of *the Family*, the Blessed Trinity.

When a family is living in accordance with God’s plan, it becomes a powerful reflection of God. In addition, and most importantly for our topic, the family provides our first experience of father and mother. God intends that our earthly father and mother, limited and imperfect as they are, reflect God to us. Once again, the fact that God is our Father does not mean that the first person of the Trinity is male, for he is above all such distinctions. But the human term “father,” though imperfect and limited, does accurately express personal qualities of God.

The Father of Jesus

God our Father is the origin of all that exists or ever will exist. All fatherhood takes its origin from him (see Eph 3:14-15). Some people think that in calling God “Father” we are simply projecting human concepts onto God. In other words, they think that calling God “Father” is our idea, rather than God’s idea. But the reverse is true. God is the first and perfect Father, and all other fatherhood finds its ultimate origin in him. He alone is the perfect Father. Human fathers are imperfect, limited, and faint reflections of our all-perfect, all-powerful, and all-loving Heavenly Father. Central to the mission and teaching of Jesus was the revelation of his heavenly Father.

The Father deeply desires our happiness and

peace. He longs for us to know him and to rest in him: *“The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him”* (Lam 3:25). So let us go to him with confidence. Let us bare our souls to him, that he may heal anything within us that hinders us from accepting and knowing him. Let us ask Jesus and the Holy Spirit to reveal the Father to us. Of all the teachings of Christ, the parable of the prodigal son best reveals the Father’s heart toward us:

And he said, “There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.’ And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to make merry.

“Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.’ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father; ‘Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found’” (Lk 15:11-32).

(CCC 238-248, 270, 370, 2779-2780)