



Novena to the Heavenly



Father for our Earthly Fathers

Novena to the Heavenly Father for our Earthly Fathers

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Novena - Intro

By Deacon Keith Fournier

Begins on Saturday June 13th, and ends on Father's Day Sunday June 21st.

St Paul wrote to the early Christians: "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;

He continued that prayer, "that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

(Ephesians 3:14 - 19)

Join with me and our Catholic Online community - and thousands of Christians around the world in a Novena to the Heavenly Father for all Earthly Fathers, Spiritual and Natural.

Our Novena prayers will end on Father's Day, the day set aside to honor our fathers and show them our deep appreciation for their sacrificial love.

For Nine Days, we will turn to the Heavenly Father, in, through and with His Son and Our Savior Jesus, and ask Him to fill all earthly Fathers with heavenly wisdom, authority, and grace. We will ask the Heavenly Father to empower and baptize earthly fathers with the Holy Spirit. So that they can live out their vital vocation in an age which has all but forgotten or even rejected fatherhood.

That they might become a sign of His Love for all men and women and help to lead the world back to the Father, in the Son and through the Holy Spirit.

May the Blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit come upon you.

Amen!

Novena Prayer

Beloved Father, through the life, death and resurrection of your only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, we have become your adopted sons and daughters.

Through Baptism we are now members of His Body, the Church, which is family.

Our Savior Jesus taught us that "whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother."

We thank you that promise includes each one of us.

As members of the family of Jesus we now turn to you in prayer, as
OUR FATHER, ABBA.

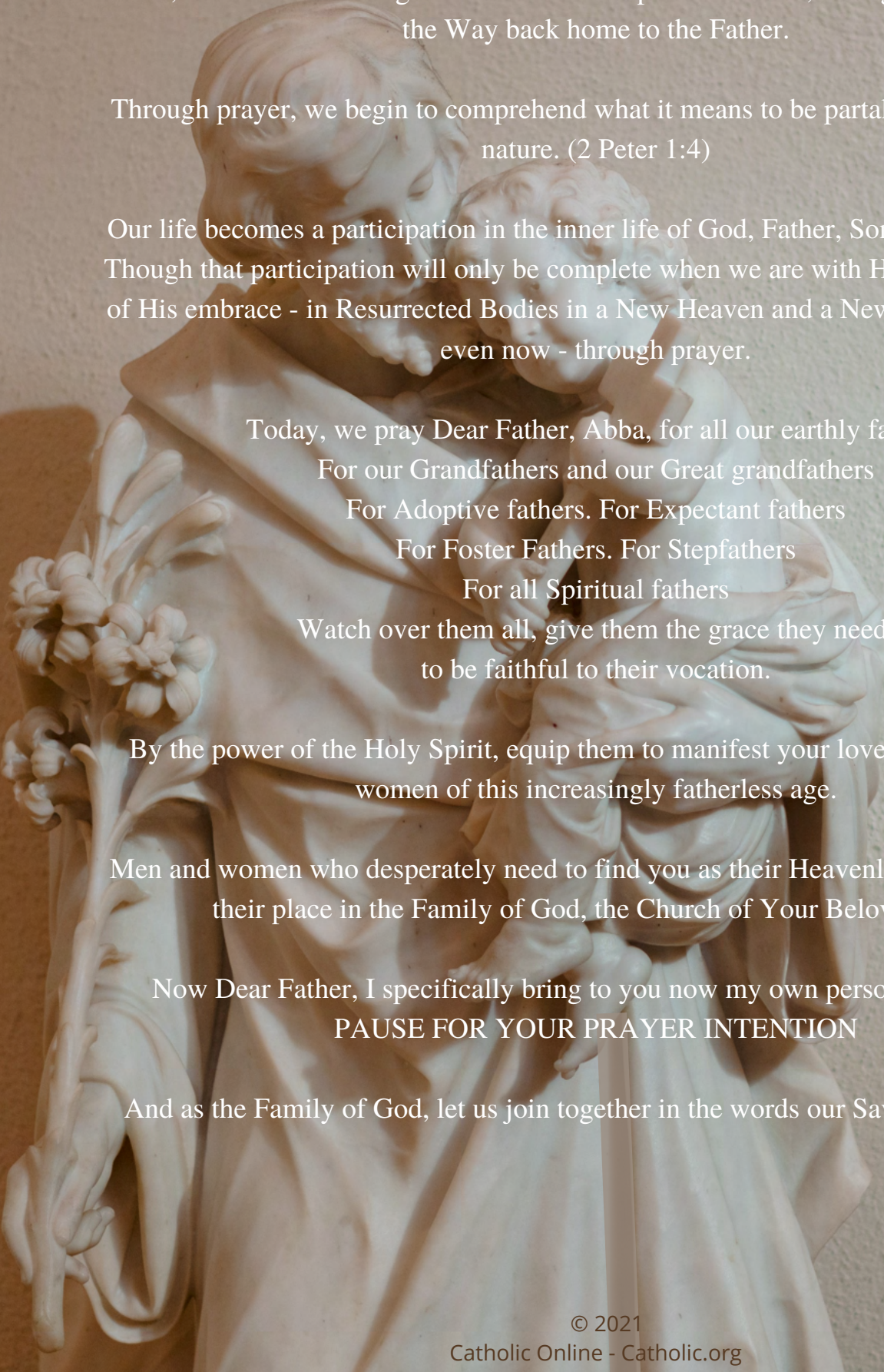
In Luke's Gospel, we read that Jesus responded to a question posed by His disciples:

Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples. He said to them, - When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test. (Luke 11:1-4)

From His response, we learn the prayer we were taught as children, the Our Father. However, Jesus is revealing a framework for our living in a constant communion with the Father.

Christian prayer is living in an ongoing communion with the Father, who communicates Himself to us completely in His Son.

When we live in this communion, life becomes a classroom where we learn the truth about who we are in Jesus.



Through prayer, we receive new glasses through which to see the landscape of life. Darkness is dispelled by the light of the Holy Spirit. We may stumble and even, at times, fall back into living at odds with God's plan. However, through prayer we find the Way back home to the Father.

Through prayer, we begin to comprehend what it means to be partakers of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4)

Our life becomes a participation in the inner life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Though that participation will only be complete when we are with Him in the fullness of His embrace - in Resurrected Bodies in a New Heaven and a New Earth - it begins even now - through prayer.

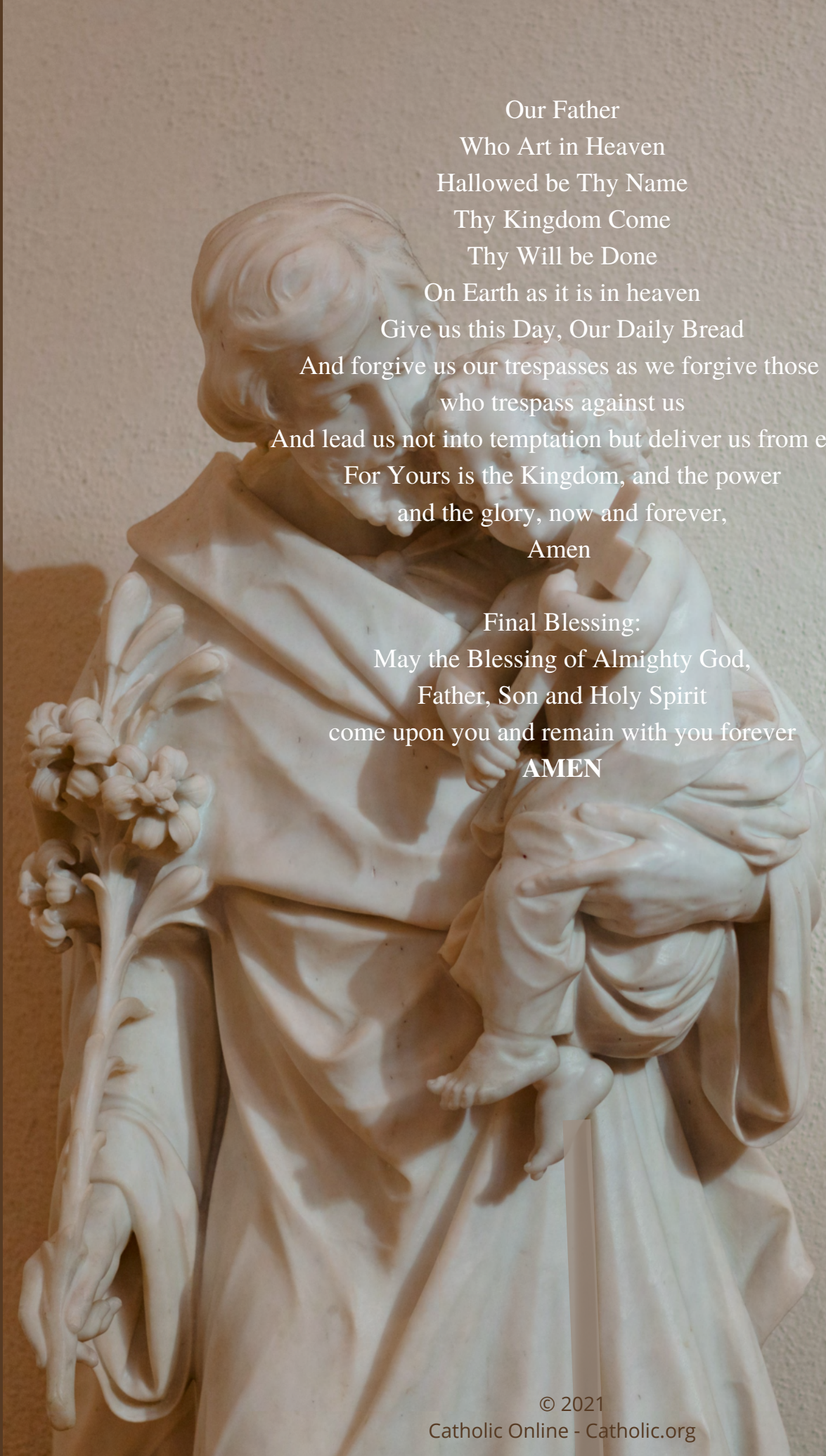
Today, we pray Dear Father, Abba, for all our earthly fathers
For our Grandfathers and our Great grandfathers
For Adoptive fathers. For Expectant fathers
For Foster Fathers. For Stepfathers
For all Spiritual fathers
Watch over them all, give them the grace they need
to be faithful to their vocation.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, equip them to manifest your love to the men and women of this increasingly fatherless age.

Men and women who desperately need to find you as their Heavenly Father and take their place in the Family of God, the Church of Your Beloved Son.

Now Dear Father, I specifically bring to you now my own personal intention:
PAUSE FOR YOUR PRAYER INTENTION

And as the Family of God, let us join together in the words our Savior taught to us



Our Father
Who Art in Heaven
Hallowed be Thy Name
Thy Kingdom Come
Thy 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
For Yours is the Kingdom, and the power
and the glory, now and forever,
Amen

Final Blessing:
May the Blessing of Almighty God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
come upon you and remain with you forever
AMEN

Day 1 Novena Reflection

St Paul wrote to the early Christians: "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;

that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."(Ephesians 3:14 - 19)

Those profound words were written to the Christians in Ephesus - and to us. The Greek word for Father and family are connected.

Paul is using them in a sort of play on words to make a profoundly important theological point.

Fathers are the foundation of families, they give them identity and meaning in both life and in death.

The Catholic Catechism says, "The divine fatherhood is the source of human fatherhood; this is the foundation of the honor owed to parents." (CCC#2214)

Day 2 Novena Reflection

The Biblical understanding of naming a child was a far more significant action than many contemporary approaches to choosing names communicate.

To name a child was understood to confer identity and introduce the child into an ongoing relationship. Naming still confers identity and relationship.

Understanding the implications of that fact takes a lifetime, and beyond.

On Father's Day weekend, we should stop the frenetic pace of life to honor and remember our earthly fathers,

We have an opportunity to reflect on what really matters most in our lives.

The ones who have "named" us, our fathers, have helped to give us our identity. They are a gift to be received from the very hand of God the Father.

We should thank them if they are still with us, and shower them with affection.

If not, we should still thank them, honor them, remember them - and continue to learn all we can from the example of their lives as we seek to live our own in love.

Day 3 Novena Reflection

I lost my earthly father in 2001. How much I still miss him. The sense of loss does not go away. It is hard to believe it has been that long.

In that same year, my beloved wife also lost her father, my father in law, with whom I also had a wonderful relationship. We refer to that year still, with a heartbreaking sadness, as the year of our two fathers.

When Father's Day rolls around, we still grieve, even as we laugh and
Just a few years ago, I lost my beloved mother. Now I face Father's Day without a mother or a father. At least, physically present. remember them both.

I know they live on; not only in the Lord, but in my life as I seek to live my own vocation as husband, father, grandfather and deacon of the Church.

But, this year seems to be especially hard. As I age, I realize how much I am like my father, both for good - and not so good.

My expressions, my tone of voice and my temperament, all reflect his influence.

As I age I grow in my respect for him - and realize all of the sacrifices he made for me, my brothers, my sister and my mother.

I also wish I had had more time with him.

Trusting in the mercy and love of God, and growing older, I now know that wish will come to pass. I eagerly await it.

Day 4 Novena Reflection

My earthly father's favorite song was the Louis Armstrong classic
"What a Wonderful World".

Each Father's Day since he died, in a melancholy mix of mourning and memories, I
listen to that song and shed more than a few tears.

As the years go by, its words and insights open for me even more, in their simplicity
and wisdom.

My father understood that those words spoke to the things that really matter - once
everything that pretends to matter is stripped away.

As his life unfolded in those later years, when his congestive heart failure seemed to
take its greatest toll, he loved the song and the sentiment it expressed even more.

As the years have passed, my sense of loss has changed.

But, as I so often tell grieving family members at funerals in my ministry as a member
of the Clergy, a Catholic Deacon, the pain of loss on the memory of our deceased
loved ones is just another manifestation of the eternal nature of love.

And, a reminder that love is stronger than death.

Day 5 Novena Reflection

This Father's Day weekend, as I watch the smiling eyes of our grandchildren, I will wish my Dad were with us to enjoy these precious moments.

When my wife and I are with our own children and grandchildren, we tell the stories of our fathers with fondness and ever deepening gratitude.

My father grew in tenderness and compassion as he faced death.

It is funny how difficulties and struggle, suffering and strife, seem to be the most effective means of refining us all.

He finally died of the heart ailment which had claimed so much of his vigor. However, like every struggle my father faced, he did not give up.

He was a fighter and he did not want to go. In fact, I was at his death bed a couple of times, or so we thought it was his death bed. He decided he had more jokes to tell and more love to give.

It was that fighting spirit which I have particularly grown to admire as the years have passed by.

Thank God, he passed it on to me. Oh, as a younger man, he perhaps fought some of the wrong battles. I know I certainly did. We all do.

But, that does not really matter any longer, in the light of eternity.

My Father died in a state of grace. In fact, I had the privilege of giving him the Body and Blood of Jesus at the first Mass I served as a Deacon.

On my way out of the Church, he looked up from his wheel chair and asked for my first blessing.

I wept.

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Day 6 Novena Reflection

Life seems to smooth out the rough patches which use to throw us of course when we were younger - and time presses us into deeper love.

I see now that it only gave my dear father time to smooth off the rough edges of a hard life and to simplify.

So, it is doing with me, his son.

I hope he is proud as he watches from the communion of love.

How my father loved to hear from us as he grew older. Sadly, in retrospect, I regret just how little I called.

How I would love to have just one of those conversations today. I miss him. I think back on those final years with my father and I still have regrets.

Though we can't get those years back, time is meant become a tutor as its highway stretches out before us. The lessons abound.

The memories of the time I did have with him take on new meaning as I walk along the path that he did, raising my family and trying to love in both word and deed.

Now, in my sixties, I remember him in his sixties.

I cherish the last times we had and I share with my own grown children, and grandchildren, the stories, and his humor.

In fact, in what is the most common experience of all, I tell his jokes, use his expressions, both facial and verbal and, in so many respects, I have become just like him.

When I was in my twenties, it was one of my greatest fears. Now, it has become one of my greatest honors.

Day 7 Novena Reflection

Our earthly fathers - and our relationships with them reflect the great meaning they symbolize in the eternal framework.

Our Heavenly Father has given us His very name, His identity. In and through Jesus Christ, His only Son, we have now become "sons (and daughters) in the Son"

- through our Baptism of new birth in water and the Spirit. We are now a part of an eternal family, and as the apostle Paul told the Christians in Rome, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, not even death.

(Romans 8:38, 39)

I am always glad when Father's Day falls on a Sunday; it gives me a special opportunity to pray at Mass for my father and my father in law.

Fathering is a great gift and a great responsibility. I cannot live it in its fullness without grace, the Divine Life of God which is given to us through Jesus Christ and mediated through our life in His church, in Word and Sacrament.

In the Holy Eucharist, we receive the One who is the Source and means of all grace.

Day 8 Novena Reflection

As a Catholic Christian, I know that I am still joined to my father and my father in law in the communion which stretches through time - and into eternity.

Living in the Church is a participation in an eternal communion of love. At that moment in the Canon of the Mass when we pray for those who have died, I always pray for them both - and I will do so on Father's day.

As a Deacon, I feel honored to be so close to the Altar, and the priest, when I offer that prayer.

I will miss my father this Father's Day. I guess, following my own instruction, it simply shows me how much I loved him - and still love him.

If you still have your father with you, love him openly and affectionately and let him know how important he is to you.

Together, let us celebrate the Gift of Fatherhood

Let us kneel with the Apostle Paul before the Father from whom every family in Heaven and on Earth is named in deep gratitude for the very gift of Fatherhood.

On Father's Day. Remember, no-one Can Change the Truth About Marriage, Fathers and Mothers, and family.

Love Your Father.
Be a Good Father.

Day 9 Novena Reflection

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, drawing from the words of Jesus recorded found in Gospel of St Matthew, teaches us that Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father:

"No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

In his first letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul wrote these words, "I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you, imitate me."

The tradition reflected in this passage is one we still practice today - our tradition of calling our clergy, "father", and of referring to our spiritual teachers as "the Fathers of the Church."

Paul is taking on the mantle of spiritual fatherhood for the congregation of Corinth.

All Earthly Fathers Do.

Christian fatherhood is a Vocation.