

# **ST JAMES LENTEN REFLECTION 2026**

## **My Father's Father: Embracing the Father's Love**

Based on Fr. Dave Pivonka's video series and his book *Joyful Sons and Daughters*

A Six-Week Lenten Journey for Parish Small Groups and Personal Reflection

# Introduction

Welcome to this Lenten journey rooted in the heart of God the Father. This study is inspired by Father Dave Pivonka's video series *My Father's Father* and his book *Joyful Sons and Daughters: Embracing the Father's Love*. Throughout these weeks, we will rediscover who God truly is — not distant, demanding, or disappointed — but a loving Father who delights in His children and desires healing, freedom, and joy for us. Lent is often associated with sacrifice, discipline, and repentance. While these are important, Fr. Pivonka reminds us that conversion begins with relationship. True transformation happens when we allow ourselves to be loved by God and live from our identity as beloved sons and daughters. This workbook is designed for parish small groups, adult faith formation, RCIA/OCIA, and personal prayer. Each session includes Scripture, teaching reflection, discussion, journaling, and prayer. May this journey lead you deeper into the Father's heart.

# Week 1

## Created for Love, Not Fear

### *Opening Prayer*

Father, we thank You for loving us into existence. Open our hearts to receive Your love more deeply this Lent. Heal our fears and help us trust You as Your beloved children. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### *Scripture*

“See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God.” — 1 John 3:1

### *Teaching Reflection*

Father Dave Pivonka teaches that many people unknowingly relate to God through fear, performance, or shame. We may believe God tolerates us rather than delights in us. But Scripture reveals a very different truth: before we do anything, we are already loved. In *Joyful Sons and Daughters*, Fr. Pivonka writes that our identity does not come from success, morality, or perfection — it comes from being chosen, created, and cherished by God. Lent is not about earning God’s approval; it is about returning to the truth of who we already are.

### *Group Discussion*

- What words or images come to mind when you hear “God the Father”?
- How have your experiences of authority shaped your image of God?
- Where in your life do you struggle to believe God delights in you?

### *Personal Reflection*

Take a few moments to journal quietly: • When have I experienced love without needing to earn it? • Where do I still try to prove myself — to God or others?

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### *Prayer for the Week*

Each day, slowly pray: “Father, I receive Your love.” Notice what thoughts or emotions arise.

# Week 2

## The Father Revealed in Jesus

### *Opening Prayer*

Lord Jesus, You reveal the Father's heart to us. Help us to see God as You see Him — merciful, compassionate, and full of love. Open our minds and hearts this day. Amen.

### *Scripture*

"Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." — John 14:9

### *Teaching Reflection*

Jesus does not merely talk about God — He reveals Him. In My Father's Father, Fr. Pivonka emphasizes that everything Jesus says and does flows from His relationship with the Father. When Jesus heals, forgives, welcomes sinners, and shows compassion, He is revealing the Father's heart. Many people believe God is disappointed, angry, or distant. Yet Jesus consistently shows a Father who pursues the lost, embraces the broken, and restores the wounded. If we want to know what God is like, we look at Jesus.

### *Group Discussion*

- What Gospel story best reveals the Father's heart to you?
- How does Jesus treat people who are wounded or sinful?
- Where does Jesus challenge your assumptions about God?

### *Personal Reflection*

Read Luke 15:11–32 (The Prodigal Son). • Which character do you most relate to today? • What does the Father's response reveal to you about God?

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### *Prayer for the Week*

Spend five minutes daily imagining yourself being embraced by the Father in Luke 15.

# Week 3

## From Orphans to Sons and Daughters

### *Opening Prayer*

Abba Father, teach us to live not in fear but in trust. Heal our hearts where we struggle to believe You care for us. Lead us deeper into Your love. Amen.

### *Scripture*

“You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but a Spirit of adoption, through whom we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’” — Romans 8:15

### *Teaching Reflection*

Fr. Pivonka speaks about the “orphan mindset” — living as though we must earn love, protect ourselves, or control outcomes. This mindset leads to anxiety, perfectionism, and fear. But God invites us into something radically different: adoption. To be a son or daughter means trusting the Father’s goodness, depending on His provision, and believing that even in suffering, He is working for our good. Christian life is not servitude. It is family.

### *Group Discussion*

- Where do you notice “orphan thinking” in your spiritual life?
- What would change if you trusted God more deeply as Father?
- How does being God’s child affect how you see suffering?

### *Personal Reflection*

- Where in my life do I struggle to trust God’s care?
- What would surrender look like in that area?

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### *Prayer for the Week*

Pray daily: “Abba, I trust You.”

# Week 4

## Mercy, Healing, and the Wounded Heart

### *Opening Prayer*

Father of mercy, You know our wounds and love us anyway. Help us open our hearts to Your healing and compassion. Amen.

### *Scripture*

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” — Matthew 11:28

### *Teaching Reflection*

Fr. Pivonka teaches that people often resist God not because of sin, but because of wounds. Experiences of rejection, abandonment, shame, or loss can make it difficult to trust anyone — including God. In *Joyful Sons and Daughters*, he reminds us that healing begins when we allow God to enter our pain. God does not wait for us to be whole before loving us. His love makes us whole.

### *Group Discussion*

- What wounds make trusting God difficult?
- How do you usually respond to failure — with fear or mercy?
- What would it mean to let God love you in those places?

### *Personal Reflection*

Write a letter to God about something that hurts or burdens you. Then write what you imagine God saying in response.

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### *Prayer for the Week*

Each day pray: “Father, I bring You my wounds.”

# Week 5

## Freedom, Obedience, and the Joy of Trust

### *Opening Prayer*

Father, teach us to trust Your wisdom and goodness. Free us from fear-based obedience and lead us into joyful surrender. Amen.

### *Scripture*

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” — John 14:15

### *Teaching Reflection*

Obedience rooted in fear leads to resentment, anxiety, and legalism. Obedience rooted in love leads to freedom, peace, and joy. Fr. Pivonka teaches that God’s commandments are not restrictions — they are expressions of His care. When we believe God wants our good, surrender becomes not loss but liberation. Sons and daughters obey not because they fear punishment, but because they trust the Father’s heart.

### *Group Discussion*

- Where do you struggle most with surrender?
- How has fear shaped your understanding of obedience?
- What would obedience look like if rooted in trust?

### *Personal Reflection*

- What area of my life am I resisting surrendering to God?
- What fear lies beneath that resistance?

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### *Prayer for the Week*

Pray daily: “Father, I trust Your will for me.”

# Week 6

## Living as Beloved Sons and Daughters

### *Opening Prayer*

Father, thank You for calling us Your children. Help us live confidently in Your love and share that love with others. Amen.

### *Scripture*

“I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly.” — John 10:10

### *Teaching Reflection*

Fr. Pivonka reminds us that Christianity is not about moral improvement but about identity transformation. When we know we are loved by the Father, everything changes — prayer becomes intimate, suffering becomes bearable, service becomes joyful, and mission becomes natural. As we receive God’s love, we become instruments of His mercy in the world. This is the goal of Lent: not simply discipline, but deeper relationship.

### *Group Discussion*

- How has your image of God changed during this study?
- Where do you experience more freedom or peace?
- How is God calling you to reflect His Fatherhood to others?

### *Personal Reflection*

- What truth about God or myself do I want to carry forward from this Lent?
- How is God inviting me to live differently?

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### *Prayer for the Week*

Pray: “Father, I receive Your love, and I choose to live as Your child.”

## **Closing Prayer**

Father, we thank You for revealing Your heart to us through Jesus. Help us live as Your beloved sons and daughters, confident in Your love and eager to share it with others. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.