

Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time, A Cycle and Fathers' Day June 20/21, 2026

The Church calendar says it's the Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary time. The Gregorian calendar says it's June 21st, the start of summer. But the Hallmark Cards calendar says it's Fathers' Day.

Google the holiday, and you find lots of ways to celebrate dear old dad, even poems and jokes, some sentimental, others corny or even snarky.

Like the joke: how is your father like a classic car? He's given to questionable emissions, makes weird funny noises, is often found in the garage, and may need adjustments to the belt; but he's made of steel, carries the family, and you wouldn't trade him in for the world.

You can find some sweet poems, likely to show up in hand-made cards today:

“Dad, you know I like Batman, and Superman's cool too,
but I don't really need them, as long as I have you.”

But kids grow, and their poems, like their lives, become a bit more complicated.

Poet Robert Hayden used his memory of *Winter Sundays* to reflect on what he had failed to understand about his challenging relationship with his father.

“Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?"

Love's austere and lonely offices. So often the essence
of fatherhood.

And that brings us to the gospel today.

When Jesus called God, Father, as He does in today's
gospel, His hearers were struck, and perhaps unsettled, by
the way Jesus portrayed His Father, and ours. Even when
they used the term Father for God, they tended to think of
God as a big version of an Oriental potentate and patriarch,
stern, demanding, remote even.

But when Jesus called God Father, He used the term
Abba, a child's name for Father; it really means, daddy.
And the Abba Jesus reveals acts at least as much as a
Mother as a Father.

Jesus says Abba sends blessings of sunshine and rain
upon the righteous and the sinner alike.

Abba sees in secret and rewards those who pray and
give alms in secret.

In the parable of the prodigal son, Abba rushes out to
find the wayward and lost child and spares no expense to
welcome him back home and restore him to the family.

Jesus forever proclaims that His Father loves sinners, for Abba always looks not on our merits, but to our needs.

The Father's love for us doesn't seek merit or value it; His love creates value.

God doesn't love us because we have worth; rather we have worth because God loves us.

Our value is a gift, not an achievement. In love, there are no achievements, only gifts.

And that gift of God, who is Father and Mother, God gives not just on Father's Day but each and every day.

God, Abba, Father, revealed by Jesus, is not paternalistic or domineering. Instead, God reveals divine love by restricting divine power.

God isn't great because God could destroy sinful humans, body and soul, in Gehenna; God is great because God chooses to pay an enormous price to save humans. Witness His Son on the Cross.

God isn't great because God created the universe, flung the stars into space, invented the platypus and the ostrich. God reveals God's greatness in His desire to share divine life and love with us, to make us free enough to love, free enough to sin and even to refuse that love.

God bestows freedom on us so that we might grow into independent, responsible, mature people--just as any parent strives to raise such children to adulthood.

That freedom can be a burden, and it certainly is a responsibility. But it is the condition of love.

In reflecting on Sin, Saint Paul's letter to the church in Rome, reminds us that we are children of the Father, not slaves.

So, when human violence claims innocent victims, or hurt befalls any of the little ones, the ones who supposedly God calls his own, and you find yourself tempted to ask of God, “What kind of father does that? How could God let that happen?” you might do well to remember that at that very moment, God is asking the same question of us.

Jesus reveals that God's power is at work precisely in God's suffering with and for the wounded, the poor, the little ones. So, it's not just that Christ is God-like. The real miracle, the real revelation, is that God, the Father, is Christ-like.

Jesus can speak convincingly about God as Father because Jesus himself took seriously the earth's homeless orphans.

He can speak credibly about living at peace in the hands of love, because Jesus knew that the world lived constantly at war in the grip of hatred.

Jesus can speak of light and joy and exultation, because He himself knew darkness, sorrow and death.

We can call upon God as Abba, Father, because Jesus knows more about God, and about the world and its people, than we do. And that's what makes reliable His word.

And Jesus is the revelation of that Abba and enfleshes that tenderness and compassion he ascribes to the Father.

He welcomes children and sinners and the unclean and the poor; He weeps over Jerusalem; He takes up the cross, lays down his life, embraces as his own the suffering of the world. Because that's what His Abba Father is like.

And in today's gospel, he reminds us that the Father knows every trial of ours, the Father acknowledges even the death of a sparrow, the Father even numbers the hairs of our head are counted.

Of course, it's easier with some of us!
So don't be afraid.

I remember one phrase my own father often repeated: if you're big, be merciful. He knew that having power and position imposes a special obligation to exercise restraint and generosity and even self-sacrificing love.

I don't know if my father learned that from his own dad, as I never knew my grandfather except through family stories. But I'm sure my dad learned that compassion from Jesus and from His Abba.

I celebrate this as Father's Day; I am after all an unwed Father!

And I hope all of us can learn from Jesus and his Father, to care for and nurture the next generation, to parent all those entrusted to us the way God parents us, with compassion, with generosity, with self-sacrificing love.

We do that we take up the cross and follow in the footsteps of Jesus; we do that when those of us who are big remember to be merciful, towards one another, towards our families and our parish families, to our fellow citizens, and to all the members of the Body of Christ for whom we pray each day.

And in God's divine alchemy, as we become transformed in the image of Abba Father, we finally become like children, children of God, able finally to enter the reign of the Father.

For each of us--- fathers, mothers, adults, teens, kids--- loving and being loved allows us to be vulnerable, to be free, free enough to take up the cross and follow Jesus, and so be like the God, Father and Mother whom Jesus reveals. Thus, we will help fashion a world worthy of God's family.

May this be a happy Father's Day for all of us. Thanks for listening. Stay wonderful.

Fathers Day 2026 children's version.

Thank you for joining me up here this morning.

Three things to share with you today:

A poem for Father's Day

Some letters that kids just like you wrote to God, on Father's Day, about their own dads.

And a reminder why Jesus called God his Father, his daddy.

First, a story about why we are going to give your dads a gift and blessing today.

I heard about a little girl who spent her allowance on a gift for her mother on Mothers Day, saying, "Mom, it's because you work so hard, and no one appreciates it." Mom was touched but she said, "Your father works hard too." "Yes," replied the child, "but he doesn't make a fuss about it." (Anthony DeMello, S.J., [Taking Flight](#))

Well, today, we make a fuss about it! That's why at the end of mass we are going to give your dads a gift and a blessing.

And I heard a poem you might like; maybe you can put it in a card for your dad.

"Dad, you know I like Batman, and Superman's cool too,

but I don't really need them, as long as I have you."

I also found some real letters that children wrote to God about their dads, and about God as Father; I like these letters because they reveal some of the richness of this day.

Dear God, why did you give Jesus such a hard time? My dad is rough on me too. So, I know what it's like. Maybe you both could ease up? (Mark, age 11)

Dear God, Father of Jesus: How does it feel to be the biggest, best dad in the whole United States? You must make out o.k. on Father's Day! (Bruce, age 10)

Dear God, my dad thinks he is You. Please straighten him out! (Wayne, age 11)

Dear Father of the universe, since the whole galaxy is yours, you must have a great family barbecue! Invite me! (Chip, age 11)

On your way home after mass, you can laugh with your dads about those.

Finally, Jesus called God "Abba," Father, daddy, because he wants us to know that God is father, and mother, to each child. Your dad, and your mom, know that you, and every child, are entrusted to their care, by your real father, the Abba of Jesus, God. Jesus wants us to know that His Father, Our Father, cradles us with love, teaches us to grow, guides us into doing with is right and becoming our best selves; just as our human dads try to do.

And at least one more thing: I'm sure you are ALWAYS good and obedient and listen to your parents and treat your brothers and sisters with respect and love, right?

Maybe not. And on occasion, MAYBE, your dad gets cross with you, or yells at you, or even has to punish you. But at the end of the day, you will still get supper, and you will still get the offer of a hug and a kiss; you will still be loved immensely.

And Jesus assures you, that it is the same with God, even more so. No matter what, even if you sin or do something wrong, even if God is sad about how you might treat your family or your friends, no matter what, God will always have another hug and a kiss for you, God will always say I love you, and will always have a home and a supper feast waiting for you.

So today, thank God for your fathers, and for all those other people in your life who help you grow into your best selves. Give your earthly dad a hug and a kiss and tell him, "Thank you" and "I love you." That's the best Fathers Day gift you can give.

And when you pray tonight before going to bed, thank God, Abba, for making a fuss over us every day!

Thanks for listening. Stay wonderful. You can go back to your parents now.