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God is the eternal source of all the most wonderful qualities that humans can possess.

At the same time, the Father is all merciful, forgiving, and compassionate. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “God reveals his fatherly omnipotence by the way he takes care of our needs; by the filial adoption that he gives us ... [and] finally by his infinite mercy, for he displays his power at its height by freely forgiving sins” (270).

Jesus addresses the Father in a way not knowable by reason alone. He uses the word “Abba” for “father.” This word, translated as “daddy,” implies a most intimate relationship between a father and his child. When we say the Our Father, we begin, “Our Father [daddy] who art in heaven.” This is not a prayer of a fearful child to a tyrannical father but of a child intimately loved by his or her daddy, asking for mercy, compassion, or forgiveness.

Knowing the Father

As Jesus’ final days on earth neared, he performed many signs and miracles. Many in the crowd believed in Jesus but refused out of fear to confess their faith in him. “Then Jesus cried aloud ... ‘Whoever sees me sees him [the Father] who sent me’ (Jn 12:44-45). These words teach us that we can learn more about the mystery of the Father by reflecting on Jesus’ life.

Rooted in the awareness of God found in nature, our quest for knowledge of God in the Old Testament reveals a creator-God who is Father of all creation and is especially solicitous for the poor

and disenfranchised. Then, in the New Testament, Jesus tells us that God the Father is “Abba,” a loving daddy, with the best of human qualities in an infinitely greater measure.

We can learn about the Father in prayer, especially by reciting slowly and prayerfully the Our Father. It is the perfect prayer taught by Jesus himself. In meditating on its words, we can appreciate more the mystery of the Father’s love.

The Holy Spirit invites us to better understand the Father by participating in the sacramental life of the Church. In particular, we remember that at baptism we assume the cloak of a believer and that in the Eucharist we become one with Jesus in his cross and resurrection. In so doing, we appreciate ever more the Father’s love in sending his son, Jesus, to save us and invite us to share all eternity with him in heaven.



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The Mystery of Faith

To know the Father requires faith. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “Only faith can embrace the mysterious ways of God’s almighty power” (273). The more we discover the richness of Jesus, the more fully we appreciate the mystery of the Father. And prayer and the frequent reception of the Eucharist give us deeper awareness of God’s love.

We reflect on the majesty of nature and the revealed words of the Old and New Testaments as we fall down on our knees in prayer to grow in awe and wonder at the unfathomable goodness of our loving Father.

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GOD  
The Father

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At creation, God implanted in humans the desire to know him and recognize hints of his existence. Early people saw God as creator — a superior being. Some believed in many gods, but often one god ruled over the rest.

God gradually prepared humans for the revelation of “who he is.” This began at the dawn of history but became more focused with the call of Abram in the Old Testament. At this time, God entered human history in a definitive way and revealed his nature, unknowable by reason alone.

### God and Israel

The first words of Genesis are, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth” (1:1). God’s love is so strong that he desired to share it by creating. Human love, at the heart of creation, is based in God — we were created in the image and likeness of God — so that the Father’s eternal love continues to express itself in the love that he



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shares with us and that we share with him and one another.

While believing in God as creator, the Israelites also professed their faith in God as “Father” in that he created the heavens and earth. Most especially, though, they believed in his fatherhood because of the covenant he made with the Jewish nation. For the Israelites, the name “Father” indicates that God, the creator of all that exists, is a loving Father — a God of mercy and forgiveness.

For the Hebrews, this word, “Father,” draws on the majesty of nature and the experience of parents, especially tenderness and love toward their children, expressed beautifully in Isaiah: “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you” (Is 66:13). In particular, the Old Testament pictures God as “the Father of the poor, of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 238).

For Israel, God is a mystery — a transcendent being far beyond what humans can imagine. God revealed this on Mount Sinai when Moses asked God his name. God replied, “YHWH (I AM WHO AM).” It reflects God who is infinitely above us, yet a hidden God who is close to us. In revealing himself as I AM, God tells us that he is a God of the present, past, and future. YHWH is intimately connected with his people and requires allegiance and trust.

### God’s Beloved Son, Jesus

Jesus taught us much about the Father. As we read in Matthew’s Gospel, “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Mt 11: 27). From Jesus, we come to recognize that our loving God is first “Father” because he is “eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father” (CCC 240). Hence, God is Father of his divine Son from the beginning, before creation began. As such, Jesus, the image of the invisible God, is the “Word of God.” John’s Gospel says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1).

Jesus continued to teach his disciples about the generous and merciful Father until his final days on earth approached. Then, he promised to send the Holy Spirit. This he did on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus’ apostles and disciples. This same Holy Spirit remains in the Church; guides the pope, hierarchy, and Church community; and preserves the Church free from error.

The early Church saw that there is only one God in three divine persons — the Father, the Son, and the



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Holy Spirit. Each person possesses the same divine nature. We use the word “Trinity” to express our belief in the unity of the three distinct persons in one divine nature. Church councils, especially the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Second Council of Constantinople (381), clarified the Church’s teaching regarding the mystery of the three divine persons in one divine nature.

### Attributes of the Father

The Father’s divine attributes, first hinted at in creation, are revealed more fully in Scripture, especially in the words and actions of Jesus. As Psalm 115 says, God the Father can do “whatever he pleases” (v. 3). His power is all encompassing, not limited in any way. He is the master of history and governs our hearts.

God is omnipotent. His might is unlimited, his power is based on love, and his dominion is universal. God the Father is the source of all that is good, beautiful, powerful, generous, and wise. In thinking of his divine attributes or qualities, imagine all that is the best in us magnified infinitely.