

## Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time C - Merciful and Loving Father

October 19, 2025

One of the most beautiful aspects of the life and ministry of Jesus is that he revealed the Father to us. Until Christ came with his preaching and miracles, the Father was still mostly a mystery in the mind and heart of his Jewish audience. With Jesus, we can now “know” God as Father. In baptism, we call God our Father, for he truly is. Jesus taught us to call God “Father” when he taught his disciples the “Our Father”. Jesus revealed a God who is a merciful and loving father. In this Sunday’s Gospel passage, Jesus continues to reveal the Father by using an example about a judge and a persistent widow. As we hear about this judge and we learn about his motivations, we know that God IS NOT LIKE this judge. It is wrong to think that Jesus is saying we need to pester and annoy God until he begrudgingly gives us what we want. No! The Gospel story of Jesus tells us of a woman approaching the judge consistently over a long period of time and demanding from him a favor. The judge delays, avoids, and doesn’t care much about the widow. In fact, the judge cares only about himself. If he renders a favorable judgment on the woman, it is for his sake, not the woman’s. But our God, the Father revealed by Jesus, is not like this judge. This means:

- We will not have to wait for an answer since he is a good father, not a selfish judge.
- God will act in our favor because he loves us, not because he is bothered by us.
- God always hears us.

This revelation provides us with some deep truths about the Father and about how amazing it is to become a Christian.

First, Jesus wants us to know God as Father and not merely as judge. While God is the Divine Judge, Jesus taught us to call him “Father”, and this means that we have a relationship with God, that we are in God’s family. Second, we must know that he loves us and doesn’t just “put up” with us. This is important because many think of themselves as too lost and too sinful to get any real attention from God the Father. But this is not the case. Lastly, we should know that God the Father is always attentive to us. We don’t have to go to prayer in a fretful and anxious way. Rather, we can go to prayer as a child goes before his father. St. Teresa of Avila says prayer is “nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us”. She emphasized that prayer is not a one-sided transaction of asking for things, but rather a deep, personal “heart-to-heart” conversation with God based on friendship. The Gospel uses the image of the widow who knocks on the door of the judge repeatedly until she gets her way. While Jesus is clear that the Father is not like this judge, we should take a cue regarding the necessity to reach out to God in prayer, in some fashion. And our prayers should not be a one way track of listing our demands.

Perhaps, as we consider this parable, we may realize that in our lives we haven’t been knocking on the Father’s door in prayer in any real way. Pope Leo recognizes that many people “knock late on the Father’s door”. This may apply to many of us. We might feel that we’ve wasted many years in sins or far from God. Well, good news! Pope Leo says, “Today’s Gospel goes on to describe the characteristics of God’s fatherhood through vivid images: that of a man who gets up in the middle of the night to assist a friend in welcoming an unexpected visitor; and that of a parent who is concerned about giving good things to his children. These images remind us that God never turns his back on us when we come to him, even if we arrive late to knock at his door, perhaps after mistakes, missed opportunities, failures, or even if, in order to welcome us, he has to “wake up” his children who are sleeping at home (cf. Lk 11:7). Indeed, in the great family of the Church, the Father does not hesitate to make us all participants in each of his loving gestures. The Lord always listens to us when we pray to him. If he sometimes responds in ways or at times that are difficult to understand, it is because he acts with wisdom and providence, which are beyond our understanding. Even in these moments, then, let us not cease to pray — and pray with confidence — for in him we will always find light and strength.” (Pope Leo XIV, Audience, July 27, 2025)

In the movie *Finding Nemo*, Marlin, the clownfish father, embarks on a dangerous journey across the ocean to find his son, Nemo, who has been lost. What is beautiful about the story is that we know Marlin loves Nemo deeply, with a protective Father's love. When Nemo is lost, Marlin heads off to find him, driven by deep love, not annoyance. Yes, he is gripped by fear for Nemo's safety, but unlike the judge in today's parable, who acts out of irritation, Marlin is willing to face any danger because he loves Nemo unconditionally. There is nothing Marlin wouldn't do for his son. In a similar way, God pursues us with love. He doesn't do so because he has to or because he is irritated. Rather, we are pursued by a God of love, always. Marlin searches the ocean out of love, facing every danger to bring Nemo home. Jesus, likewise, searches the world for his lost sheep, even to the point of dying on the cross. In so doing, Jesus reveals to us God the Father.

As we reflect on Jesus revealing God as a loving Father this week, we should take some time to reflect on how we pray. Sometimes we can be fretful and anxious in prayer, and like the Gentiles, we can go about multiplying our prayers out of angst. Jesus warns us against this: he says, (Matthew 6:7-8) "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." We should approach prayer with a calm and peaceful spirit. Unlike the widow who persistently pleaded with an uncaring judge, we come before a Father who delights in us. Take a moment today to pause, breathe, and speak to God with trust, knowing He hears you. Let our prayer be simple, perhaps just say, "Father, I am here." Allow His peace to settle our soul, for He is not a distant judge but a Father who cares deeply. In this calm confidence, present our needs, our joys, and our struggles, trusting that He responds with wisdom and love, always for our good. Jesus reveals a Father who is always attentive and loving. We should confidently knock on the Father's door and do so regularly. Like the widow who returned to the judge, we are called to persist, not out of desperation, but out of trust in a loving Father. We need to make prayer a daily rhythm in our lives. Set aside a time each day—perhaps in the morning or evening—to speak with God. It needs not be long or elaborate; a simple "Our Father" or a heartfelt word will do. As St Teresa of Avila said, we should see God as our intimate friend, sharing with Him all that's in our heart, our mind and our soul. Like all fathers (and mothers), God wants us to be close to him.