

## Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June. Reflection. Father's Day

Our Father, in heaven, hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt 6:9-10)

Today is "Father's Day". Not necessarily an easy day in the lives of many for very many reasons. A couple of weeks ago I had an email from Dobbies (The garden Centre Firm) saying that if I wished not to receive emails relating to Father's Day from them I could click on a link and opt out. If you wish to opt out you can stop reading this message now – I will not know; though I hope there is not a need to do so.

How many times have you prayed those words in some form or other? "Our Father, who art in heaven..." You cannot remember but definitely hundreds and probably thousands of times; every Sunday in Church and possibly every day in school depending upon when and where you attended school, may be every day at home too.

It is so easy to let those words trip off the tongue without ever focussing on the depth of meaning contained within them.

Just the first two words can be a multi day reflection should we choose such a route. I will limit my reflection to just one page.

The simple word "Our" reminds us that we are in a relationship with others that has a commonality within it. When we use the word "Our" there is that message of a shared "ownership" or activity.

When I began my Circuit ministry, working in South Wales, I would visit couples and the wife might say, "my son" whilst her husband was sitting in the same room. I would have expected the phrase "our son." I wondered was there a message that she wanted to share without directly saying anything. Was she saying here that her husband was not the father to her son? This happened on many occasions and I eventually realised it was just the way they spoke. (Like Winnie the Pooh I can be a bear of very little brain). The joint "ownership" of the son was taken for granted it did not need declaring.

When we say "Our Father" it is a statement Jesus asks us to make declaring our communal relationship that has its commonality in God.

(For some the word "Father" is a problem in itself due to earthly relationships but it was the term Jesus used and so I use it. God is to be the model of Fatherhood/Parenthood; our understanding of God should not be based upon our earthly experience of a parent.)

"Our Father" is a reminder that we belong to each other in a relationship; we have a relationship with God and we have relationships with others.

Such a simple statement means that Nationalism, Racism, snobbery, class discrimination and sexual discrimination are all out alongside all other forms of discrimination. Our commonality is in the God of all creation who formed all people: "Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness," (Genesis 1:26.) In that verse there is also the message of God being a community but still one God – "in our image." All mankind are made in the image of God with all the diversity there in.

If we pray those words and yet hate our neighbour then the prayer is a mockery and we make ourselves liars. Not all neighbours and people are equally "likeable," some people are very close to being unlikeable, why? Is it that they do not see the commonality of humanity; they fail to treat others with respect and dignity and in so doing make it hard for others to do so to them?

This Father's day let us be reminded of Christ's call "to love one another as he has loved us" even those who in their living do not truly say "Our Father".