

Father O'Connor's Homily for 21 June 2026
Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time-A
Father's Day

Jeremiah 20: 10-13

Romans 5: 12-15

Matthew 10: 26-33

Saint Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, used to ask her grade-school classmates: "Have you ever seen a saint praying?" She would then add: "If you haven't, come to my house this evening. You will see my dad on his knees in his room praying for us, his children."

Father's Day recognizes Christian fathers and encourages them to be great role models for their children.

Ernest Hemingway's "The Capital of the World" is a touching short story about a father and a son. Paco and his wealthy father had had a falling out, and the young man ran away from home.

His father was crushed. After several days, the boy did not return, so he set out to find him. But his search was not successful.

Finally, in a desperate attempt to locate him, his father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper that read: "Dear Paco, Meet me at the Hotel Montana at noon on Tuesday. All is forgiven! Love, Papa." On Tuesday, at the Hotel Montana, 800 Pacos showed up, all looking for love and forgiveness from their fathers.

What a magnet that ad was! 800 Pacos! It tells us that we all crave inner peace. We know what it is like when we long for someone who can assure us that "All is forgiven." Father's Day reminds us that our world wants and needs lots of loving fathers – no matter what their children are named or what they have done.

A man tells about how, when he was a small boy, his father's birthday rolled around. And all he could come up with to buy him a present was 17 cents. He put the dime, the nickel, and the two pennies in an envelope and gave it to his father with this note: "Happy Birthday. Thanks for being the best dad in the whole world. Sorry I couldn't buy you a gift. This is all I've got. I love you, Dad."

Years later, when he was going through his father's things after his funeral, he discovered, tucked in his father's wallet, that envelope with the note, the dime, the nickel, and the two pennies that his father had carried all those years.

Why had his dad kept those tokens of their relationship? Because they represented pure love and pure gratitude. And this reminds us of the gracious, awesome, unconditional, unmerited love that our Heavenly Father has for us.

Here is what Jesus tells us about Him in today's Gospel: "Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge.... So do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows." Pure love on our Heavenly Father's part calls for pure gratitude on ours.

Many, many fathers today are great role models, like Saint Louis Martin (the father of the Little Flower, Saint Therese of Lisieux). In fact, both he and his wife, "Zelie" Guérin Martin, were canonized as saints by Pope Francis in 2015. They are the first-ever married couple to be canonized as saints together. Saint Louis Martin and Saint Zelie Martin are "parental heroes" of our Faith.

But while the ideal of fatherhood is a noble one, the reality we see in our world is sometimes quite different. This Father's Day weekend is a graced time for all fathers to reflect upon their calling as responsible and well-integrated men. True fatherhood demands commitment. And commitment calls for maturity, sacrifice and love. Our world has an urgent need for great fathers. And we take this opportunity this weekend to recognize and to honor those who strive daily to be the best fathers that they can be.

A favorite gift for Father's Day is a cap or t-shirt emblazoned with the words "World's Greatest Dad." You may see a lot of them this weekend worn by proud fathers.

There is one Dad who is absolutely the "World's Greatest Dad," our Heavenly Father. We can lean on Him in times of pain and sorrow. We can call on Him in times of fear and anxiety. We can depend on Him for all our needs – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

Let us take time this Father's Day to honor Him, the absolutely "World's Greatest Dad." Let us pray the Our Father thoughtfully during this Mass, savoring the meaning of each line and welcoming the love of our Heavenly Father for us.

May all earthly fathers draw strength from their Heavenly Father.

And on this Father's Day, please also pray for us priests, your spiritual Fathers – who are called to be Fathers of our parish communities through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the Priesthood.

To all fathers, grandfathers, stepfathers, adoptive fathers and Godfathers, and all those men who show a fatherly influence over others: Happy Father's Day.

And through the intercession of Saint Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, may the Lord continue to bless you and your families, now and always. Amen.