

Fatherhood

Jesus addressed his Father in heaven as *Abba*— literally, “Daddy.” While Jews of his time were accustomed to understanding their God as a father, they did not experience this childlike familiarity. They were far more comfortable with a stern and distant Father-God.

However, if art through the centuries is any indication, Christians find it no easier to deal with Jesus’ image of the Father than do Jews. Michelangelo’s famous depictions of the Father in the Sistine Chapel show God as someone to be feared. While fierceness can be an admirable characteristic, it is not the attribute of fatherhood that Jesus chose to emphasize.

Images of God the Father that may more accurately depict Jesus’ reflections are “Daddy’s-little-girl,” or a father enveloping his child as they perfect a golf club swing.



Creation of the Sun, Moon, and Plants by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel.

The Father who is a guide, teacher, and comforter is more in the vein of Jesus’ description than God as judge, taskmaster or drill sergeant.

When children grow up and develop their own personalities, it is difficult to sustain the close, easy relationship epitomized in the idea of “Daddy.” Many adolescents seem determined to torpedo any intimacy between father and child. Barriers go up that keep everybody at a comfortable distance, but not a distance where trust, understanding and love can prosper. This distance may also apply to the relationship with our Father in Heaven.



This Father’s Day, as we honor the men who brought us into this world, we should consider the image of *Father* that characterized Jesus’ prayer. This ideal deep, caring intimacy is our touchstone with the God who created us. It is also the ideal for how we care for those around us.