

## Let Us Pod

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### 'Fatherhood' with Father Noel Hector

#### Father Noel Hector

Father Noel Hector is a Priest in the Church of England who lives near Bristol. He is married with two children. Noel's podcast is his reflection on being a father.

#### Full text of podcast

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. We can all say this off by heart, the most famous of all Christian prayers. It is the prayer Jesus taught his disciples and is the family prayer of the church. In it Jesus teaches a new thing, that God, although creator of the universe, is also our father. He knows us by name and we are his. In Aramaic Jesus uses the word *abba* which is a familiar name a child may use of his own father and is a name of gentle kindness as well as of respect. The church believes that there is in being a father something of God himself, for God shares with you and with all fathers, the gift of creativity and nurture. God is called *abba*, father, for he creates, nurtures and protects. This is what you, too, are called to be: a father who shares in the creation, nurture and protection of a child.

As you think about this, there can be no greater joy or responsibility than sharing in fatherhood with God. Joy, because you share in the gift of life. Responsibility, because a child will look to you as a model of what a father is.

As you think of being a father, of course the very word will bring an image to your mind. You have or had a father, and what you learned from him, for good or bad, will remain with you. As you think of him, try too to think of what a child needs to thrive and grow. Security; food and shelter; patience; love and understanding; fun, laughter and honesty. Most of all your child will look to you to be a model of how to live. This is a great challenge, for it will call for all of your maturity and faith to provide what your child needs.

But, of course, being a parent is also something you share with people the world over, so don't feel for a moment that you are alone. If you are a new father, or about to be one, then at times the responsibility or the changes that you fear may seem very great. Take your time. You will find that help is available when you look. Remember that the church, too, is your family from whom you can receive advice and support.

Of course your child will not remain a child. As adulthood comes, so the relationship you have with your children will change. They will see you differently, but always as their father. What you show them, and how you live your life will continue to nurture and teach them. Indeed you never stop being a father. Some of the greatest lessons are learned through the challenges life gives us, the choices of work, marriage and many other things and your advice and example will be needed. As it will when life's joys and sadnesses come too. Your children will learn not just from what you say, but rather from the person that you are. So how you choose to live your life, the values you live by and the respect you show to your children, to others and to yourself will be what you teach. For good and for bad.

In Luke's gospel we read one of the parables Jesus told about being a father. It is as if Jesus takes what is best in fatherhood and shares it with God. It demonstrates how love, commitment and forgiveness work and it shows how life is to be celebrated and enjoyed. It reminds us that we are still children no matter how old we are, yet it gives us a model of how to be fathers to our children as well. It gives us an insight into one family divided by jealousy and sibling rivalry and how a father began to heal those divisions. Above all, it shows a father accepting his children as they are and loving them for it. As you listen to it again picture each person and put yourself into their position, the position of the sons and their father.

The story of the prodigal son, and the waiting father.  
(Text from Luke 15:1-32)

God our Father, thank you for the gift of life and for the life you have given to me in my child.  
Help me to learn from you, and from those around me, to be a loving father.  
Give to me those gifts I need, of patience, compassion and joy  
To lead my child into maturity of life and faith  
Holding you always as my model and my guide  
That through me, my child may come to know you also.  
This I ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught me to say  
Abba, Father.  
Amen

#### **Useful contacts**

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