

Or we could share from within our cultural and spiritual experience what we have personally come to understand about God. This is the God we pray to and in whom we profess our faith every Sunday when we pray the Creed.



Questions to Consider

- Father, Creator, I AM are just some of the names that seek to describe God. What name(s) or image(s) for God do you use most when praying? Why?
- What forms of praying make most sense to you, today?
- What might your response be to people who say they find it impossible to call God 'Father' ?
- 'Walking on holy ground', this wonderful phrase invites us to revisit how we live our lives.
- How is our relationship with God and creation interconnected?
- Where do you think you could make most changes in your life to live as a 'green' Christian?

Conversations on Faith



Number 2

The Prayer of Christians 'We believe in God'

During his life on earth, Jesus taught us many things, but perhaps the most important was to call God 'Father', and to invite us to trust and pray to God as 'Father'. "When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name..." (Lk 11:2). It is through our faith in Jesus Christ that we confidently approach our living, all-supporting God as *Father*.

In the creed at Sunday Mass, we profess our belief in God 'the Father almighty'.

This special name stresses God's loving care, but it is just one possible way of naming God.

The God we say we put our faith in is also the 'creator of heaven and earth'. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, speaks of God creating out of nothing everything that is (Gen.1). This is an awesome God, a God to bow down before and worship, a God of mystery. There is no prospect of domesticating this God (as we might do with God as 'Father'). How can anyone make something out of nothing, and be beyond and above all things? And of course God is beyond all human comprehension (1 Cor. 2:9).



Father,

And yet **God is**, and – quite wonderfully – this God wants to be in relationship with us. To help this to happen God did the most amazing thing, becoming human, taking on human flesh and living here on earth with us. When we accept this truly amazing truth, from then on we begin to more and more call God 'Father', as this is what Jesus taught us to do.

The whole Bible is the story of God and God's relationship with human people. From the beginning (Gen 3: 9) God is shown as wanting to communicate with us. This relationship with humankind is presented as both *intimate* and yet *transcendent*.

God speaks with us, and yet remains totally mysterious.

The famous story about Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3) is a great parable which brings us to a sense of wonder.



Burning bush

It sets us pondering on the nature of God, from whom the whole marvellous creation comes. When we hear of a bush burning, but *not being destroyed*, it immediately conveys something quite out of the ordinary is about to happen here.



God talks to Moses and He sets him a great task: "Set my people free!", and at the same time God's mystery is maintained. Moses is reminded of God's awesomeness and glory and special-ness when he is told to take off his shoes, for he is walking on holy ground.

Here we are taught another way of naming God – Moses asks God for a name, because a name is normally our way of identifying someone, and as he was being asked to bring a message to his people, Moses understandably felt that he must be able to *name* the one who sent him – but the only name he is given is the mysterious 'I AM' – 'I am who I am.' ... Moses is to tell people that "I AM has sent me to you."

Here, God is sharing a deep truth with us. The most truthful thing, and the first thing to say about God is simply that God is – I AM. **God is** – many people today say that they don't believe in God, but God assures us, whether we believe or not – I AM. This is the deepest mystery, but it is also the deepest truth, that *God is*. Closely linked to it is the statement that this Creator God will always be *with us*. This 'I AM' is God's name for ever, for all generations; this 'I AM' is a constant presence in our lives, no matter what we do, or what suffering comes our way - God is, I AM is always with us.

We may like to reflect on some other graphic Biblical descriptions of God – like the lovely image of the Shepherd pasturing his flock (Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:11) or the Gardener tending his vineyard (Isa 5:1; Jn 15), or the loving Mother who cares for her little infant (Isa 49:15); "I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands" or the Lover wooing his sweetheart in the Song of Songs (e.g. "My beloved speaks and says to me: rise, my love, my fair one, and come away..." 2:10).