Romans 8:12-17 New Revised Standard Version

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are obligated, not to the flesh,
to live according to the flesh— 13 for if you live according to the flesh,
you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the
body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are
children of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall
back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry,
"Abba! Father!" 16 it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit
that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs: heirs of
God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with him so that
we may also be glorified with him.

Notes:

Who do you know God as? Father in Heaven? Abba God? Heavenly Daddy? I have heard these, and other designations similar to them, in my short time as a vocational minister. With these words, men and women have entered into the presence of God acknowledging a particular intimacy which is possible between Creator and the one created. For those outside of the Christian tradition, especially those of the first century, to refer to God as "father" would have been a radical move for it suggested God was not distant, disconnected, or disinterested with human needs, hurts, and concerns.

In the passage before us this Sunday, we hear the Apostle Paul speak of one of the great benefits and blessings which has been made available through the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. Rather than knowing God at a distance and in a manner which can best be described as "intimidating," those who receive this gift experience a new status before God. We are said to become "children" as a result of God's adoption process. As a result, we can now approach God in a way which acknowledges God as "father."

We use the term "Abba" which is Aramaic for "daddy" because of Jesus' similar usage in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to his arrest. To do so does not imply that God is male, but rather is a personal way for entering into the presence of the One who cares for us even better than our own earthly parents. To hear of God as "father" can bring up some warm images when we consider the influence of our own earthly fathers in our lives. However, not everyone shares such favorable memories. To hear the very term "father" can bring up harsh realities from a past which one would rather forget than remember.

When we say not only "We believe in God…", but, more specifically, "We believe in God the Father…" what are we suggesting about our understanding of God?

1. We are dependent upon God to supply for our daily needs.
2. We trust God to listen when no one else can understand.
3. We know God as the one to whom we can come home.

Prayer Pebble: Lord, help me to know you not at a distance, but as close and personal to my life.