

94 and Not Dead Yet: Our Father

by [Reg Green](#) (May 2023)



Party of Three at the Table, Pavel Filonov, 1915

Long ago, when Mother's Day (May 14 this year) started getting traction, it was clearly a commercial ploy. But the people I

know went along with it because we do feel a unique gratitude to the Mom who has put our welfare ahead of everything else.

We joined in, though less feelingly, on Father's Day, less feelingly because though most of us loved Pop too he was generally a more ambiguous figure, being the enforcer also. As the father of five, I can confirm it's not a simple role to play.

There's a statistic to prove this: one of my sons, who for a time worked for AT&T, told me that, by a mile, more phone calls are made on Mother's Day than any other day, including Christmas. Calls on Father's Day are very high, too, but making up a far higher proportion of them than on any other day are collect calls.

Now, however, the calendar is crammed with dedications to ever more remote groups—some purely opportunistic, some advancing a sectarian political cause behind a warm-sounding slogan no one could object to, some obvious (very obvious) jokes, some so bland, like Couples Appreciation Month, that only an exhausted copywriter who has run out of all other worthy thoughts could have come up with it.

Just one day recently was named National One Cent Day, Pillow Fight Day, Reading is Fun Day, Atheist Day, National Sourdough Bread Day, and so on and on. What started as half-serious, half-self-seeking praise for a few groups is now lost in an impenetrable jungle of competing hallelujahs.

And so, predictably, only that day's group pays any attention—a complete inversion of the original purpose which was supposed to be that everyone would pay attention to *them*. Some of the more innocent members of that group are disappointed, even a little resentful, that their day is indistinguishable from any other day. But it's a useful way to re-learn W.S. Gilbert's truism, "When everyone's somebody, no one's anybody."

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