



## WEEK 5 OF EASTER YEAR A

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*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

*"Let me go to the house of the Father"* – such were the last reported words of St. John Paul II, before he slipped into a coma. He later died on the beginning of the Octave of Easter, on the eve of the Feast of the Divine Mercy, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2005 at 9:37pm. He had been elected Pope on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 1978, and for 27 years had been the 263<sup>rd</sup> successor of Peter, one of the longest pontificates in the church's history.

In the Hebrew language there are two words used for Father - '*Adon*' and '*Baal*'. Both mean origin, source. An '*Adon*' was used to describe the perfect Father : one who loves, commands, guides, encourages, trains, rebukes, punishes, chastises, who delights in his children's wisdom and is deeply pained by their folly; who is considerate to his children's needs, who is self restrained in his dealings with them; one who considers their burdens and sins, and who ultimately does all this because he has their highest ends always in sight. God is often called *Adonai* in the Old Testament, because this is how he relates to Israel his people, as a loving Father – he is not a pushover, but one who loves them with a love which is both tender but firm, a love which corrects but which has their ultimate good always in view.

The word '**Baal**' is the opposite of all this. A father - a '**Baal**' - is tyrannical, disregards the good of his children and thinks only of his own advantage, he refuses to correct or when he does it is with violence and anger; he is a father who enslaves, who abuses, and who ultimately brings himself and others to ruin. This for the Jews was a perfect description of the fatherhood of the false gods, of what the idols of the surrounding nations did to their followers. One of the Baals, Jesus refers to is '**Baal zebul**', an Egyptian God of the flies. Today

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we no longer worship statues, but we do worship what they represented: money, pleasure, success. They reward us in the same way too!

In Jesus, to the shock of his Jewish brethren, he introduces another word 'Abba', which reflects a further level of intimacy which is possible in our relationship with God, our Father. We can call him **Abba**, which literally means 'Daddy', a term that a small child would use to speak to his Father.

St Paul speaking to the Galatians speaks about this filial relationship with the Father in terms of an inner dialogue, and interior communication which the Holy Spirit sets up within us, in which the Father speaks to us, as he spoke to his Son Jesus when he was baptised, telling us and confirming us in our identity as Sons and Daughters of God. *Galatians 4:6 : "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"*

*"Going to the house of the Father"* is how St. John Paul describes death. St. John Paul said we live today in a culture of death, but we live also in a culture of fear, and most particularly in a culture with an unspoken fear of death itself. The sum of all our fears! The Covid 19 epidemic puts this before in a dramatic way, that we cannot avoid.

What allows a person, such as John Paul, to go to his death in peace, is to have discovered this Fatherhood of God – in this life – to have discovered that God is Abba, Adonai and not Baal.

Finding the Father, knowing him as Abba, means you also find lasting security; you find the meaning of your existence – it was he who created you; you find your own personal identity and name in God; you find true, faithful love and unconditional acceptance; you find a true home; you find strength and courage to face life and its trials with peace; and ultimately you find victory over death and your eternal room in the house – the heart - of the Father.

Have you discovered this? Pray the Our Father slowly, and ask as St. Philip and St. Thomas asked Jesus in the gospel of Sunday today : *"show us the Father and we will be satisfied."*

Many doubt the Fatherhood of God, because of their own personal sufferings or that of others, accusing God of being a bad or absent father because when they needed him most he was not there for them, or so they think! Most people doubt the Fatherhood of God because of their own poor, abusive, or non-existent relationship with their own earthly father. This is a big obstacle, because we tend to think that the heavenly Father is just a bigger, badder version of the earthly one! No one wants more disappointment or pain, so we avoid getting too close. This distortion of the Fatherly image of God can only be healed only through

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the grace of supernatural forgiveness which Christ brings from his cross, reconciling us with our earthly parents.

John Paul lost most of his family by the age of 21, his sister died before he was born, when he was 9 his mother died, when 12 his brother died, his father died when he was 21. His country was overrun by the Nazi's when he was 19. Instead of embittering him these events pushed him firmly into the arms of his heavenly Father.

St. John Paul II early in his priesthood adopted the motto **"Totus tuus Maria"** , taken from his act of consecration to Jesus through Mary.

In the month of May, a month dedicated to **Mary**, the church puts before us the figure of our heavenly mother, the **Virgin Mary**, who never left the house of the Father, who was conceived without original sin, and who never sinned. Under the cross she was given a new role as our mother : *'woman behold you son.'* In this role Mary is tasked with the job of leading all her children into the house of the Father.

She does this for the apostles in the upper room at Pentecost, and wants to do this for you! Will you let her? Will you entrust yourself to her?



**Suggestion : Pray a simple act of consecration to Mary at the beginning of each day, entrusting your day to her. Then let her get to work!**

**Prayer - Mary, my mother, I give myself totally to you as your possession and property. Please make of me, of all that I am and have, whatever most pleases you. Let me be a fit instrument in your immaculate and merciful hands for bringing the greatest possible glory to God.**

