

(English translation)

Rome, november 25, 1998

## Word of Life

**‘But to all who received him, he gave power to become children of God’ (Jn 1:12).**

This is the amazing new thing that Jesus proclaimed and gave to humanity: to be children of God, becoming God’s children through grace.

But how, and who is given this grace? It goes to 'to all who received him' and to those who would receive him in the following centuries. We must receive Jesus in faith and in love, believing in him as our Saviour.

But let’s try to understand more deeply what it means to be children of God.

All we need do is look at Jesus, the Son of God, and at his relationship with the Father. Jesus prayed to his Father as he did in the ‘Our Father’. For him the Father was ‘Abba’, which means Dad, Daddy, the one he turned to in tones of infinite trust and boundless love.

But since he had come on earth for us, it was not enough for him to be the only one in this privileged position. By dying for us, redeeming us, he made us children of God, his brothers and sisters, and through the Holy Spirit he made it possible for us too to enter into the bosom of the Trinity. This means that we too can use his divine words, ‘Abba, Father’ (Mk 14:36; Rom. 8:15): ‘Dad, my Daddy’, our Daddy, with everything this implies: the certainty of his protection, security, surrender to his love, divine consolation, strength, ardour – the ardour born in the hearts of those who are certain they are loved.

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We are made one with Christ and daughters and sons in the Son by baptism and the life of grace that comes from it.

In these words from the Gospel there is, moreover, an expression that reveals the profound dynamic within this being ‘daughters and sons’ which must be realized day by day. We have, in fact, ‘to become children of God’.

We become, we grow as children of God, by co-operating with the gift he has given us, by living his will which is wholly concentrated in the commandment of love: love for God and love for our neighbours.

To accept Jesus means, in effect, to recognize him in all our neighbours. And they too will be helped to recognize Jesus and believe in him if they can discern, in the love we have for them, a spark of the boundless love of the Father.

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This month, in which we remember specially Jesus' birth in the world, let’s try to welcome and accept one another, seeing and serving Christ himself in each other.

The result will be that a flow of mutual love, of living knowledge like that binding the Son to the Father in the Spirit, will be established also between us and the Father, and time and again we will feel coming to our lips Jesus’ own words: ‘Abba, Father.’

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