



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
Archdiocese of Malta

8th July 2015

81/2015

HOMILY BY ARCHBISHOP CHARLES J. SCICLUNA DURING HIS FATHER'S FUNERAL

WE BELIEVE IN JESUS, WE KNOW THE FATHER, WE ARE COMFORTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

WE BELIEVE IN JESUS

« Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me » (Jn 14:1).

The invitation of Jesus pierces the heart of each and every one of us as we grieve over the loss of our dear papà Emanuel.

« Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me » (Jn 14:1).

Our presence here, beside the mortal remains of our father, in this temple dedicated to God in honour of St Sebastian the Martyr, signifies an act of respect; without a shadow of doubt, it is also an act of faith in Jesus.

Yes, we believe in Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, the son of Mary, the wife of Joseph, the carpenter.

We believe in Jesus, who spent his youth toiling in Joseph's workshop and independently, and who was later baptized in the River Jordan by his cousin, John, the son of Zechariah, and who embarked upon his mission to announce the Kingdom of God, calling for repentance, teaching with authority and through parables, healing the sick and casting out demons. We believe in Jesus who wept when he heard that his friend Lazarus was dead, and who felt compassion for the dead daughter of Jairus and for the dead son of the widow of Naim. On Mount Tabor, he was transfigured and his clothes became dazzlingly white as he conversed with Moses and Elijah, before the very eyes of his apostles, Peter, Jacob and John. We believe in Jesus who was accused even though he was innocent, was condemned to death, was crucified; died and was buried and on the third day, rose from the dead. As St Peter declared: « And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved » (Acts 4:12).

We truly believe in Jesus who gave us a solemn promise and offered us much solace when he said:

« There are many rooms in my Father's house; if there were not, I should have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you and after I have gone and prepared you a place I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am, you may be too » (Jn 14:2-3).



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

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Today, this promise has come to fruition even for our Papà. Indeed, he has been greatly blessed:

« Father, the hour has come: glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you; and, through the power over all mankind that you have given him, let him give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him. And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent » (Jn 17:1-3).

WE KNOW THE FATHER

Yes, to know God the Father and Jesus Christ is to have eternal life!

And Jesus said: « To have seen me is to have seen the Father » (Jn 14:9).

We thank you Lord, because you have revealed yourself to us through your Son, Jesus Christ, the carpenter of Nazareth.

On this day, we also thank you for the beautiful gift of fatherhood, a gift with which you endowed the world through the mystery of creation.

I, together with my siblings, wish to thank you for our papà, Emanuel, the husband of our mother, Maria Carmela. Through them, we were called into existence; through them, you gave us the gift of life. Whole-heartedly and joyfully, they welcomed the sublime vocation to parenthood.

As it is so well stated in the Book of Bin Sirach:

« With all your heart honour your father,
never forget the birthpangs of your mother.
Remember that you owe your birth to them;
how can you repay them for what they have done for you? » (Si 7:27-28).

We thank you Lord for our Papà, Leli the carpenter from Qormi, who lovingly reflected the beautiful rays of your love for us. Through his diligent mastery of his trade, and above all, through his simple but strong faith that was bequeathed to him by our grandparents Nina and Karmenu, he drew us close to his Son, the “Emmanuel”, the carpenter of Nazareth, the Saviour of the world.

We thank you Lord for the many times which you advised us and corrected us, through our father, a man of character. And You continue to do so today, by advising us and educating us, even in the moment of his death. As we read in the Letter to the Hebrews:



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

« Suffering is part of your training; God is treating you as his sons. Has there ever been any son whose father did not train him? If you were not getting this training, as all of you are, then you would not be sons but bastards. Besides, we have all had our human fathers who punished us and we respected them for it; we ought to be even more willing to submit ourselves to our spiritual father, to be given life. Our human fathers were thinking of this short life when they punished us, and could only do what they thought best; but he does it all for our own good, so that we may share his own holiness » (Heb 12:7-10).

Above all, we thank you Lord, for the pervading joy which our father brought in our midst! We thank you for the repeated anecdotes which he shared with us, relating his experiences as the fourth son amongst fourteen siblings, his first work-experience at the tender age of nine, the start of his trade as a carpenter with his father's brother, Uncle Kalċ, his adventures and pranks as a youthful immigrant in Canada, the blessing of his marriage to our mother, the start of his small business in which he became a skilled carpenter who instructed and employed people in the trade so that together they worked on ambitious projects for the country, as well as for the service of many families. Papà's experience continues to serve as a means of education for us: it always was, and remains, a precious and dear school.

As Scripture so succinctly reminds us:

« Keep your father's principle, my son,
do not spurn your mother's teaching.
When you walk, these will guide you,
when you lie down, watch over you,
when you wake, talk with you.
For this principle is a lamp,
this teaching is a light;
correction and discipline are the way of life » (Pr 6:20, 22-23).

WE ARE COMFORTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

If today we are comforted, then this is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who enlightens our hearts as children of an exemplary father and adoptive children of our Father in Heaven.

As we read in the Second Reading:

« Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God. And if we are children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

so as to share his glory. I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us » (Rom 8:14-18).

Lord, into the hands of your great mercy, we entrust Papà, and pray that you will endow him with an inheritance that does not fade and never ends, with splendour that does not stem from vanity, with your glory and with eternal life.

We pray for all this with confidence, not for own own merits, but because we truly believe in the Communion of Saints:

In fact, we believe that "until the Lord shall come in His majesty, and all the angels with Him (Mt:25,31) and death being destroyed, all things are subject to Him, (1 Cor 15:26-27) some of His disciples are exiles on earth, some having died are purified, and others are in glory beholding "clearly God Himself triune and one, as He is"; but all in various ways and degrees are in communion in the same charity of God and neighbor and all sing the same hymn of glory to our God. For all who are in Christ, having His Spirit, form one Church and cleave together in Him. (Eph 4:16) Therefore the union of the wayfarers with the brethren who have gone to sleep in the peace of Christ is not in the least weakened or interrupted, but on the contrary, according to the perpetual faith of the Church, is strengthened by communication of spiritual goods." (*Lumen Gentium* 49).

Yes, Lord Jesus, Immanuel, dearest Carpenter of Nazareth, we believe in God, and we believe in you! Therefore, although our heart may be sorrowful, it is not confused.

WE BELIEVE IN THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS; IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS; THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD AND LIFE EVERLASTING.

And to our dearest Papà:

Eternal rest, grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him, may he rest in peace.

Amen.

✠ **Charles Jude Scicluna**
Archbishop of Malta