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The Prodigal Son

Experts ponder God the Father

Amid all the innovative things Jesus said, there is a word Jesus uttered that Father John Colacino, CPPS, thinks likely startled a few listeners:

Abba.

Through generations of Jewish scriptural history, God's name was essentially unspoken, explained Father Colacino, interim assistant professor of systematic theology at St. Bernard's Institute. God was often being viewed as remote, judgmental and capable of retribution.

"All of a sudden you have Jesus speaking of him in a diametrically opposite way as 'abba,' as 'daddy.' That had to be earth shattering," he said.

The image was so remarkable, Father Colacino continued,

that St. Paul some 20 years after the death of Jesus continued to use the term in his letters.

"Even in Greek-speaking communities, Paul is using Jesus' own word, 'abba,'" he observed. Although the familiar term for God faded out of common usage early in the Christian era, the idea it suggested of a loving, caring "daddy" has not.

Pittsford's Church of the Transfiguration pastoral associate, Barbara Swiecki, has that image in mind when she thinks of God the Father.

"When I think of God the Father, that's where I go - daddy," said Swiecki, who teaches a course on the Trinity for the Diocese of Rochester's Alive in Christ catechist formation pro-

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STORY BY LEE STRONG