



The Holy See

FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Sistine Chapel

Sunday, 10 January 1999

1. *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"* (Mt 3:17).

These solemn words resound on today's feast of the Baptism of Jesus. They invite us to relive the moment when Jesus, baptized by John, emerges from the waters of the River Jordan and God the Father presents him as his Only-begotten Son, the Lamb who takes upon himself the sin of the world. A voice is heard from the heavens, as the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove rests upon Jesus, who thus publicly begins his mission of salvation: the mission of a *humble and meek servant*, ready to share and give himself completely: *"He will not cry or lift up his voice ... a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice"* (Is 42:2-3).

The liturgy lets us relive this moving Gospel scene: amidst the penitent crowd that approaches John the Baptist to receive baptism, Jesus is also present. See, the promise is about to be fulfilled and a new age begins for all mankind. This man, who in appearance is no different from others, is in fact God come among us to give power to those who receive him, *"who believe in his name, ... to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God"* (Jn 1:12-13).

2. *"This is my beloved Son, hear him"* (Gospel acclamation).

Today this proclamation and invitation, full of hope for mankind, echo particularly for the children who, in a few moments, will become God's new creation through the sacrament of Baptism. Having become sharers in the mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, they will be enriched with the gift of faith and will be incorporated into the people of the new and definitive Covenant, which is the Church. The Father will make them his adopted children in Christ, revealing to them a unique way of life: to listen as disciples to his Son, to be called and to be really his children.

The Holy Spirit will come down upon each of them and, as happened for us on the day of our Baptism, they too will enjoy that life which the Father gives believers through Jesus, the Redeemer of man. This immense wealth of gifts will give them, like every baptized person, a sole task, which the Apostle Paul never tires of teaching the first Christians with the words: "*Walk by the Spirit*" (Gal 5:16), that is, always live and act in the love of God.

I hope that the Baptism received today by these little ones will make them courageous witnesses of the Gospel throughout their lives. This will be possible as a result of their constant effort. However, dear parents, as you thank God today for the extraordinary gifts that he gives your children, your educational work will also be necessary, as will the support of their godparents.

3. Accept, dear brothers and sisters, the invitation that the Church extends to you: be their "teachers in faith", so that the seed of new life will develop in them and reach full maturity. Help them by your word and especially by your example.

May they quickly learn from you to love Christ, to pray to him constantly, to imitate him by always answering his call. You have received in their name, in the symbol of the candle, the flame of faith: take care that it is constantly nourished, so that each of them, in their knowledge and love of Jesus, may always act according to the wisdom of the Gospel. In this way they will become true disciples of the Lord and joyous apostles of his Gospel.

I entrust each of these children and their families to the Virgin Mary. May Our Lady help them all to follow with fidelity the path begun with the sacrament of Baptism.

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