



The Holy See

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

**MASS AND SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM
SISTINE CHAPEL**

*Sunday, 9 January 2000
Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*

1. *"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased"* (Mk 1: 11).

These words, recounted by the Evangelist Mark, bring us straight to the heart of today's feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which closes the Christmas season. Today we commemorate the manifestation of the mystery of Trinitarian love, which occurred right at the beginning of the Messiah's public activity.

On the holy night in Bethlehem, Jesus was born among us in the poverty of a stable; on the day of Epiphany, the Magi acknowledged him as the long-awaited Messiah of the nations; today, all our attention is focused on his person and mission. The Father speaks to him directly: "You are my beloved Son", as the heavens are opened and the Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove (cf. Mk 1: 10-10). The scene on the banks of the Jordan thus presents the solemn proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God. And so his saving mission begins publicly.

2. The Baptism that the Lord receives takes place in the context of John the Baptist's penitential preaching. The ritual act of being immersed in water, offered by the Precursor, was an outward sign of repentance for sins committed and of the desire for spiritual renewal.

All this refers to the Christian sacrament of Baptism, which I will shortly have the joy of administering to these children and which we received a long time ago. Baptism inserted us into

God's own life, making us his adopted children in his only-begotten "beloved Son".

How can we not give thanks to the Lord, who today calls these 18 infants to become his children in Christ? We surround them with our prayer and our affection. They come from Italy, Brazil, Spain, the United States and Switzerland. With great joy we welcome them into the Christian community, which today really becomes their family. Together with them I am pleased to extend a most cordial greeting to their parents and godparents who are presenting these little ones at the altar. Let us thank the Lord for the gift of their lives and even more for the gift of their spiritual rebirth.

3. It is very significant that the sacrament of Baptism is being administered in this Sistine Chapel, where stupendous masterpieces of art remind us of the wonders of salvation history, from man's origins to the universal judgement. It is even more significant to contemplate these signs of God's action in our lives during the Jubilee Year, which is totally centred on the mystery of Christ, who was born, died and rose again for us.

I hope that these little ones will grow in the faith they are receiving today, so that they can soon take an active part in the Church's life.

I ask you, dear parents, who are participating with intense feeling in this important moment, to renew the promises of your baptismal vocation. In this way you will be better prepared to fulfil your task as the first teachers of faith for your children. These little ones must find in you, and in their godparents, support and guidance on the path of fidelity to Christ and the Gospel. Be examples for them of solid faith, of deep prayer and of active involvement in the Church's life.

May Mary, the Mother of God and of the Church, accompany the first steps of these newly baptized children. May she always protect them, along with their parents and godparents. May she help each of them to grow in love for God and in the joy of serving the Gospel, and thus be able to give full meaning to their lives.

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