



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO BRESCIA AND CONCESIO

VISIT TO THE PARISH CHURCH OF SANT'ANTONINO WHERE GIOVANNI BATTISTA MONTINI WAS BAPTIZED

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Concesio

Sunday, 8 November 2009

(Video)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My Pastoral Visit to Brescia, the birthplace of my Venerable Predecessor Paul VI, ends with this Meeting. It is a real pleasure for me to conclude it in Concesio, the very place where he was born and began his long, rich human and spiritual journey. Even more meaningful indeed, moving is my stop here in *your* church which was also *his* church. Here, on 30 September 1897, he received the Sacrament of Baptism and then who knows how often he must have come back here to pray. In all likelihood it was here that Paul VI came to understand better the voice of the divine Master who was calling him to follow him and who led him, through various stages, to the point of becoming his Vicar on earth. Here too resonate the inspired words which Giovanni Battista Montini, by then a Cardinal, spoke on returning to his baptismal font 50 years ago, on 16 August 1959. "Here I became a Christian", he said, here I became a son of God, I received the gift of faith" (cf. G.B. Montini, *Discorsi e Scritti Milanesi*, II, p. 3010). In remembering him I would like to greet affectionately all of you, his fellow citizens, your parish priest and the Mayor, together with the Bishop Luciano Monari, Pastor of the Diocese, and all those who would have liked to be present at this brief yet intense moment of spiritual closeness.

"Here I became Christian.... I received the gift of the faith". Dear friends, starting with this very affirmation by Pope Montini and with his other addresses, may I take this opportunity to recall the importance of Baptism in every Christian's life. Baptism, he says, can be called "the first fundamental, vital and supernatural relationship between the Lord's Passover and our Easter" (*Insegnamenti IV*, [1966], 742). It is the Sacrament in which "the mystery of Christ's death and Resurrection is conveyed to his followers" (*L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, [ORE], 3 June 1976, p. 10); it is the Sacrament that initiates the relationship of communion with Christ. As St Paul says, "We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead... we too might walk in the newness of life" (Rom 6: 4). [Paul VI](#) liked to emphasize the Christocentric dimension of Baptism through which we put on Christ, enter into living communion with him and belong to him.

In times of great changes in the Church and the world, how often did [Paul VI](#) insist on this need to remain steadfast in living communion with Christ! Indeed it is only in this way that we become members of his family which is the Church. Baptism, he noted, is the "door through which men enter the Church" (*ORE*, 23 May 1974, p. 1) and the Sacrament by which we become "brothers of Christ and members of that humanity destined to be part of his mystical and universal Body, which is called the Church" (*ibid.*, 24 April 1975, p. 1). Through Baptism God makes the person born to new life share in his own life and, "the baptized person can effectively stretch forth towards God-Trinity, his ultimate end, in order that he may share in his life and his infinite love" (*ibid.*, 4 October 1973, p. 3).

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to go back in spirit to the visit that the then-Archbishop of Milan made 50 years ago to this parish church of yours. Remembering his Baptism, he questioned himself as to how he had preserved and lived out this great gift from the Lord. While acknowledging that he had neither understood nor fostered it adequately, he confessed: "I want to tell you that the faith I received in this church with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism has been for me the light of life... the lamp of my life" (*op. cit.*, pp. 3010.3011). Echoing his words, we might ask ourselves: "How do I live out my Baptism? What is my experience of walking in the newness of life of which St Paul speaks?". In the world in which we live to borrow another of Archbishop Montini's sayings there is often "a cloud that takes from us the happiness of gazing calmly at the divine heavens... there is a temptation to believe that faith is an encumbrance from which we need to free ourselves, something that unless it is surmounted is obsolete, useless" (*ibid.*, p. 3012). Therefore the human being thinks that "to respond to all the aspirations of the human heart, the economic and social life " suffices (*ibid.*). In this regard, the words of St Augustine, who wrote in the *Confessions* that our hearts are restless until they rest in God (cf. 1,1), are particularly eloquent. Only if a human being finds the light that illuminates him and offers him the fullness of meaning is he truly happy. This light is faith in Christ, the gift received in Baptism that must be constantly rediscovered if it is to be passed onto others.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us not forget the immense gift received on the day on which we were

baptized! At that moment Christ bound us to him forever but, on our part, have we remained joined to him through decisions consistent with the Gospel? It is not easy to be Christian! It takes courage and tenacity to avoid conforming to the world's mentality; to avoid being seduced by the sometimes powerful attraction of hedonism and consumerism and also, if necessary, to face misunderstandings and even, at times, real persecution. Living out one's Baptism implies remaining firmly united with the Church, even when we see some shadow or blemish on her face. It is she who has renewed the divine life within us and accompanied us throughout our journey: let us love her, let us love her as our true mother! Let us love her and serve her with a faithful love that is expressed in concrete actions in our own communities, in not succumbing to the temptations of individualism and prejudice and in overcoming all rivalry and division. In this way we will become true disciples of Christ! May Mary, Mother of Christ and of the Church whom the Servant of God [Paul VI](#) loved and honoured with deep devotion help us from Heaven. Dear brothers and sisters, I am ever grateful for your most cordial and beautiful welcome, and, as I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, I wholeheartedly impart a special Blessing to you all.

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