



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Library of the Apostolic Palace

Sunday, 10 January 2021

Multimedia

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Buongiorno!

Today we are celebrating the Baptism of the Lord. A few days ago, we left Baby Jesus being visited by the Magi; today we find him as an adult on the banks of the Jordan. The Liturgy has us take a leap of some 30 years, 30 years about which we know one thing: they were years of hidden life, which Jesus spent with his family — some, firstly in Egypt, as a migrant to escape Herod's persecution, the others in Nazareth, learning Joseph's trade — with family, obeying his parents, studying and working. It is striking that the Lord spent most of his time on Earth in this way: living an ordinary life, without standing out. We think that, according to the Gospels, there were three years of preaching, of miracles and many things. Three. And the others, all the others, were of a hidden life with his family. It is a fine message for us: it reveals *the greatness of daily life*, the importance in God's eyes of every gesture and moment of life, even the simplest, even the most hidden.

After these 30 years of hidden life, Jesus' public life begins. And it begins precisely with his baptism in the River Jordan. But Jesus is God; why does Jesus get baptized? John's baptism consisted in a penitential rite; it was a sign of one's willingness to convert, to be better, asking forgiveness of one's sins. Jesus surely did not need it. In fact, John the Baptist tries to prevent it, but Jesus insists. Why? Because he wants to be with the sinners: for this reason he gets in line with them and does the same thing they do. He does so with the attitude of the people, with their attitude [of the people] who, as a liturgical hymn says, approached "with bare soul and bare feet". A bare soul, that is, without anything covered, like this, a sinner. This is the gesture Jesus makes,

and he goes down into the river to immerse himself in the same condition we are in. Indeed, baptism actually means “immersion”. On the first day of his ministry, Jesus thus offers us his “programmatic manifesto”. He tells us that he does not save us from on high, with a sovereign decision or act of force, a decree, no: he saves us by coming to meet us and taking our sins upon himself. This is how God conquers the world’s evil: by humbling himself, taking charge of it. It is also the way that we can lift up others: not by judging, not by suggesting what to do, but by drawing near, empathizing, sharing God’s love. Closeness is God’s way with us; he himself says so to Moses: ‘Think: what people has its gods as close as you have me?’. Closeness is God’s way with us.

After this gesture of compassion by Jesus, an extraordinary thing happens: the heavens open and the Trinity is finally revealed. The Holy Spirit descends from the heavens in the form of a dove (cf. *Mk* 1:10) and the Father says to Jesus: “Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased” (v. 11). God manifests himself when mercy appears. Do not forget this: God manifests himself when mercy appears, because that is his face. Jesus becomes the servant of sinners and is proclaimed the Son; he lowers himself upon us and the Spirit descends upon him. Love calls upon love. It also applies to us: in each act of service, in every work of mercy we perform, God manifests himself; God sets his gaze upon the world. This applies to us.

But even before we do anything, our life is marked by the mercy that was laid upon us. We have been saved freely. Salvation is free. It is the freely given gesture of God’s mercy toward us. Sacramentally this is done on the day of our Baptism; but even those who are not baptized always receive God’s mercy, because God is there, waiting, waiting for them to open the doors of their hearts. He draws near, allow me to say, he caresses us with his mercy.

May Our Lady, to whom we now pray, help us to cherish our *baptismal identity*, that is, the identity of being shown mercy, which lies at the base of faith and life.

After the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, I offer an affectionate greeting to the people of the United States of America, shaken by the recent siege on the Congress. I pray for those who lost their life — five — they lost it in those dramatic moments. I reiterate that violence is always self-destructive. Nothing is earned with violence and so much is lost. I exhort the government authorities and the entire population to maintain a deep sense of responsibility, in order to calm souls, to promote national reconciliation and to protect the democratic values rooted in American society. May the Immaculate Virgin, Patroness of the United States of America, help keep alive the culture of encounter, the culture of care, as the royal road to build the common good together; and may she do so with all those who live in that land.

And now I offer a heartfelt greeting to all of you, who are linked via the media. As you know, due to the pandemic, today I was unable to celebrate Baptisms in the Sistine Chapel, as customary. However, all the same, I wish to assure my prayers for the children who were enrolled and for their parents, godfathers and godmothers; and I extend it to all children who in this period receive Baptism, receive the Christian identity, receive the grace of forgiveness, of redemption. May God bless everyone!

And tomorrow, dear brothers and sisters, with Christmas Time concluded, we will resume with the liturgy, the journey of Ordinary Time. Let us not tire of invoking the light and strength of the Holy Spirit, so that he may help us to experience ordinary things with love and thereby render them extraordinary. It is love that transforms: ordinary things seem to continue being ordinary, but when they are done with love they become extraordinary. If we remain open, docile, to the Spirit, he inspires our daily thoughts and actions.

I wish you all a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci* !