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Angelus: the decisive scene of Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan

At midday the Holy Father appeared at the window of his study to pray the Angelus with the thousands of faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square. The Pope, as usual, reflected on the day's Gospel reading, which focused on the words of St. John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!". A word accompanied by the gaze and the gesture of the hand that indicates Him, Jesus.

"Let us imagine the scene", Francis began. "We are on the bank of the River Jordan. John is baptizing; there are so many people, men and women of different ages, who have come there to the river to receive baptism from the hand of the man who reminded many of Elias, the great prophet who nine centuries earlier had purified the Israelites of idolatry and who had led them to true faith in the God of the Covenant, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob".

"John preaches that the kingdom of Heaven is near, that the Messiah is about to manifest Himself and that it is necessary to prepare oneself, to be converted and to behave justly, and he begins to baptise in the Jordan to give the people a concrete means of penance. These people came to repent of their sins, to do penance, to begin their life again. He knows, John knows that the Messiah, the Consecrated of the Lord is now near, and the sign for recognizing Him will be that the Holy Spirit will alight upon Him; indeed, He will bring the true Baptism, Baptism in the Holy Spirit".

"And so the moment comes: Jesus appears on the bank of the river, in the midst of the people, the sinners – like all of us. It is His first public act, the first thing He does when He leaves the home in Nazareth at the age of thirty: He goes down to Judea, He goes to the Jordan and He has John baptize Him. We know what happens – we celebrated it last Sunday. The Holy Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove and the voice of the Father proclaims Him His beloved Son. John is disconcerted, because He manifested Himself in an unthinkable way: in the midst of the sinners, baptized like them, or rather, for them. But the Spirit enlightens John and makes him understand that in this way God's justice is fulfilled, His plan of salvation is accomplished: Jesus is the Messiah, the King of Israel, but not with the power of this world, but rather as the Lamb of God, who takes upon Himself and takes away the sin of the world".

"John indicates Him in this way to the people and to his disciples, as John had a large circle of disciples who had chosen him as a spiritual guide, and indeed some of them would become the first disciples of Jesus. We know

their names well: Simon, later known as Peter, his brother Andrew, James and his brother John. All fishermen, all Galileans, like Jesus”.

“Dear brothers and sisters, why have we paused at length on this scene? Because it is decisive! It is not an anecdote. It is a decisive historical fact! This scene is decisive for our faith, and it is decisive also for the mission of the Church. The Church, in every time, is called to do what John the Baptist did, to show Jesus to the people, saying: ‘Behold the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!’ He is the only Saviour! He is the Lord, humble, in the midst of sinners, but it is He: there is no other powerful one to come; no, no, it is He!”

“And these are the words that we priests repeat every day during Mass, when we present to the people the bread and wine that have become the Body and Blood of Christ. This liturgical gesture represents the whole mission of the Church, who does not proclaim herself. Woe betide the Church who proclaims herself; she loses her compass and does not know where she is going! The Church proclaims Christ; she does not bring herself, she brings Christ. Because it is He and He alone Who saves His people from sin, Who liberates them and guides them to the land of true freedom”.

“May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Lamb of God, help us to believe in and to follow Him”.
