

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 170802a

Wednesday 02.08.2017

General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.20 a.m. in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall, where the Holy Father Francis met with groups of pilgrims and faithful from Italy and all over the world.

In his address in Italian the Pope focused on the theme "Baptism: the door to hope" (From *St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* 3: 26-28).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present.

The General Audience concluded with the recital of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

There was a time when the churches pointed east. One entered the holy building through a door open towards the west and, walking in the nave, one headed east. It was an important symbol for ancient man, an allegory that over the course of history has progressively declined. We men of the modern age, far less accustomed to reading the great signs of the cosmos, almost never perceive as detail of this type. The west is the cardinal point of the sunset, where the light dies. The east, instead, is the place where the darkness is overcome by the first

light of dawn, and this recalls Christ, the Sun rising from above to the horizon of the world (cf. *Lk 1: 78*).

The ancient rites of Baptism required catechumens to give the first part of their profession of faith facing west. And in this position they were asked: "Do you renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his service?". And the future Christians repeated in unison, "I renounce him!". Then they turned towards the apse, in the direction of the east, where the light is born, and the candidates for Baptism were again asked, "Do you believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?". And this time they answered, "I believe".

In modern times, the appeal of this rite has in part been lost: we have lost our sensitivity to the language of the cosmos. Naturally there remains the profession of faith, carried out according to the baptismal interrogation, proper to the celebration of some sacraments. This anyway remains intact in its meaning. What does it mean to be Christians? It means looking to the light, continuing to make the profession of faith in the light, even when the world is shrouded by light and darkness.

Christians are not exempt from darkness, both exterior and also interior. They do not live outside the world, but by the grace of Christ received in Baptism, they are men and women who are "orientated", who face east: they do not believe in darkness but rather in the light of day; they do not succumb to the night, but hope for the dawn; they are not defeated by death, but yearn to rise again; they are not bowed by evil, because they always trust in the infinite possibilities of goodness. And this is our Christian hope. The light of Jesus, the salvation that Jesus brings us with His light that saves us from darkness.

We are those who believe that God is the Father: this is the light! We are not orphans, we have a Father and our Father is God. We believe that Jesus descended in our midst, walked with us in our life, making himself a companion especially of the poorest and most fragile: this is the light! We believe that the Holy Spirit works tirelessly for the good of humanity and of the world, and even the greatest sufferings of history will be overcome. This is the hope that He gives us again each morning! We believe that every affection, every friendship, every good wish, every love, even the smallest and most neglected, will one day find their fulfilment in God: this is the strength that drives us to embrace our daily life with enthusiasm. And this is our hope: living in hope and living in the light, in the light of God the Father, in the light of Jesus the Saviour, in the light of the Holy Spirit Who drives us to go ahead in life.

Then there is another very beautiful sign in the baptismal liturgy that reminds us of the importance of light. At the end of the rite, a candle is given either to the parents, if the baptized is a child, or to the baptized himself, if an adult, and it is lit from the paschal candle. This is the large candle that on Easter night enters the church, which is in total darkness, to express the mystery of Jesus' Resurrection; from that candle, everyone lights their own and transmits the flame to those next to them. In this sign there is the slow propagation of Jesus' Resurrection in the lives of all Christians. The life of the Church is – I will use a rather strong word – a contamination of light. The more light of Jesus we have as Christians, and the more light of Jesus there is in the life of the Church, the more she is alive. The life of the Church is a contamination of light.

The most beautiful exhortation we can address to each other is that of always remembering our Baptism. I would like to ask you: how many of you remember the date of your own Baptism? DO not answer, because some of you will be ashamed! Think, and if you don't remember, today you have homework to do: go to your mother, your father, your aunt, your uncle, your grandmother, your grandfather, and ask: "What is the date of my Baptism?". And never forget it again! Is that clear? Will you do that? Today's task is to learn to remember the date of Baptism, which is the date of rebirth, it is the date of light, it is the date in which – if I may allow myself to use the word – the date in which we were contaminated by the light of Christ. We were born twice: first our natural birth, then a second time, thanks to the encounter with Christ, in the baptismal font. There we "died to death", so as to live as sons of God in this world. There we became humans as we would never have imagined. This is why everyone must spread the perfume of the Chrism with which we were anointed on the day of our Baptism. In us there lives and works the Spirit of Jesus, the first-born of many brothers, of all those who oppose the inevitability of darkness and death.

What grace when a Christian truly becomes a "Cristo-foro", that is, a bearer of Jesus in the world! Especially for

those who are going through situations of mourning, of desperation, of darkness and of hatred. And this can be understood by many small details: from the light that a Christian keeps in his eyes, from that backdrop of serenity that is not undermined even in the most difficult days, from the desire to start to love again even after experiencing many disappointments. In the future, when the history of our days is written, what will be said about us? That we were capable of hope, or that we hid our light under a bushel? If we are faithful to our Baptism, we will spread the light hope. Baptism is the beginning of hope, that hope of God, and we will be able to transmit reasons for life to future generations.

Greetings in various languages

French

I welcome French-speaking pilgrims, especially those from France and Haiti. May this vacation period help you to be increasingly aware that your Baptism is a source of hope to be conveyed to others. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly those from Japan, Nigeria, Iraq and the United States of America. I am especially pleased to welcome the pilgrims from the Chaldean Patriarchate, accompanied by Bishop Shlemon Warduni. Upon all of you, I invoke the grace of the Lord Jesus, that you may be a sign of Christian hope in your homes and communities. May God bless you!

German

I warmly welcome the German-speaking pilgrims present at this audience. In the Church, through Baptism, Christ has entrusted His light to us. If we are faithful to Christ by confessing Him to the world and doing good works in spite of the darkness of evil, we can spread the light of God's hope. For this reason, may the Holy Spirit give us His grace.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, in particular the groups from Spain and Latin America. I invite you to remember your Baptism and to be the light of Christ for others, as bearers of the new life received in Baptism, so that those who suffer and who are discarded from society may perceive through our witness of life the clarity of hope in Christ. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

I cordially welcome Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, especially the members of the Fraternity of the "Irmãos de Assis" here today. Dear friends, being baptized means being called to holiness. We ask for the grace to live our baptismal commitments as true imitators of Jesus, our hope and our peace. God bless you!

Arabic

I warmly welcome Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Syria, Lebanon and the Middle East. Baptism is the mystery of steadfast hope that never disappoints, because it enables us to enter into the Love of God, and it makes us an Altar of the Holy Spirit, children of the Kingdom of God and members of the mystical Body of Christ, that is, the Church. Let us remember the date of our Baptism and celebrate it, because it is the day of our new birth. May the Lord bless you and always protect you from the evil one!

Polish

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims. Last week we remembered our meetings in Poland and the events linked to the World Youth Day that we experienced a year ago. I thank the Lord for the enthusiasm of faith inspired in young people by the Holy Spirit during those days, and which continues to be strengthened in their hearts. Be sentinels of hope for future generations! With this memory there also comes to mind the figure of the beloved Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, the anniversary of whose death falls today. May we keep alive the memory of this great shepherd, dedicated to men, trusting in merciful Jesus. God bless you!

Italian

Dear Italian-speaking pilgrims: welcome! I am pleased to welcome the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, the Angelic Sisters of St. Paul and the Murialdine Sisters of St. Joseph, here for their respective General Chapters. I greet parish groups and Associations, with a special thought for the Cooperative Auxilium and the children assisted by this latter. May your visit to the Tombs of the Apostles increase in each one of you the desire to follow Jesus and His Gospel with renewed commitment.

I address a special thought to young people, the sick and newlyweds. May the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, which we celebrate next Sunday, help us all never to lose hope, but instead to place ourselves trustfully in the hands of Christ our Saviour.
