

FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD
MASS AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Sistine Chapel
Sunday, 11 January 2015

[Multimedia]

In the First Reading we heard that the Lord takes care of his children like a parent: He takes care to provide his children with *nourishing food*. God says through the Prophet: "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy?" (Is 55:2). God, like a good father and a good mother, wants to give good things to his children. And what is this nourishing food that God gives us? It is *his Word*: his Word makes us grow, it enables us to bear good fruit in life, just as the rain and snow imbue the earth, making it fruitful (cf. Is 55:10-11). Likewise you, parents, and you too, godmothers and godfathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, will help these children grow if you give them the Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus. And give it also by your example! Every day, make it a habit to read a passage of the Gospel, a small one, and always carry a little Gospel with you in your pocket, in your purse, so you can read it. And this will set the example for your children, seeing dad, mom, their godparents, grandpa, grandma, aunts and uncles, reading the Word of God.

You, mothers, give *milk* to your children — even now, if they are crying with hunger, feed them, don't worry. Let us thank the Lord for the gift of milk, and let us pray for those mothers — there are so many, unfortunately — who are unable to breast-feed their children. Let us pray and let us try to help these mothers. Thus, what milk does for the body, the Word of God does for the spirit: *the Word of God makes faith grow*. And thanks to faith we have been begotten by God. This is what happens at *Baptism*. We have heard the Apostle John: "Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God" (1 Jn 5:1). Your children are baptized in this faith. Today it is *your* faith, dear parents, godfathers and godmothers. It is the faith of the Church, in which these little ones receive Baptism. But tomorrow, by the grace of God, it will be *their* faith, their personal "yes" to Jesus Christ, which gives us the Father's love.

I said: it is the faith *of the Church*. This is very important. Baptism integrates us into the body of the Church, into the holy People of God. And in this body, in this people journeying on, faith is passed down from generation to generation: it is the faith of the Church. It is the faith of Mary, our Mother, the faith of St Joseph, of St Peter, of St Andrew, of St John, the faith of the Apostles and of the Martyrs, which has come down to us, through Baptism: the chain of transmission of the faith. This is really beautiful! It is a passing of the flame of faith from hand to hand: we too will soon express it with the act of lighting candles from the great Paschal candle. The large wax candle represents the Risen Christ, living in our midst. You, families, take the light of faith from Him in order to pass it on to your children. You receive this light in the Church, in the Body of Christ, in the People of God who are journeying through every time and in every place. Teach your children that one cannot be a Christian

outside of the Church, one cannot follow Jesus Christ without the Church, for the Church is Mother, who makes us grow in the love of Jesus Christ.

One last feature emerges powerfully from today's Bible Readings: in Baptism we are *consecrated by the Holy Spirit*. This is what the word "Christian" means, it means consecrated like Jesus, in the same Spirit in which Jesus was *immersed* throughout his earthly existence. He is the "Christ", the Anointed One, the Consecrated One; we, the baptized, are "Christian", meaning consecrated, anointed. Therefore, dear parents, dear godfathers and godmothers, if you want your children to become true Christians, help them to grow up "immersed" in the Holy Spirit, that is to say, in the warmth of the love of God, in the light of his Word. For this reason, do not forget to invoke the Holy Spirit often, every day. "Do you pray, Ma'am?" — "Yes" — "Whom do you pray to?" — "I pray to God". But "God" does not exist like this: God is one person, and as a Person the Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist. "Whom do you pray to?" — "The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit". We usually pray to Jesus. When we pray the "Our Father", we pray to the Father. But we do not often pray to the Holy Spirit. It is very important to pray to the Holy Spirit, because He teaches us how to bring up the family, the children, so that these children may grow up in the atmosphere of the Holy Trinity. It is precisely the Spirit who leads them forward. For this reason, do not forget to invoke the Holy Spirit often, every day. You can do so, for example, with this simple prayer: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love". You can say this prayer for your children, as well as, naturally, for yourselves!

When you recite this prayer, you feel the maternal presence of the Virgin Mary. She teaches us to pray to the Holy Spirit, and to live in accordance with the Spirit, like Jesus. May Our Lady, our Mother, always accompany the journey of your children and of your families. So be it.