



# The Holy See

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POPE FRANCIS

## **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*Saint Peter's Square*

*Wednesday, 13 November 2013*

### Video

*Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!*

In the *Creed*, through which we make our Profession of Faith every Sunday, we state: “I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins”. It is the only explicit reference to a Sacrament contained in the *Creed*. Indeed, Baptism is the “door” of faith and of Christian life. The Risen Jesus left the Apostles with this charge: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole of creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk 16:15-16). The Church’s mission is to evangelize and remit sins through the Sacrament of Baptism. But let us return to the words of the *Creed*. The expression can be divided into three points: “*I confess*”; “*one Baptism*”; “*for the remission of sins*”.

1. “*I profess*”. What does this mean? It is a solemn term that indicates the great importance of the object, that is, of Baptism. In fact, by pronouncing these words we affirm our true identity as children of God. Baptism is in a certain sense the identity card of the Christian, his birth certificate, and the act of his birth into the Church. All of you know the day on which you were born and you celebrate it as your birthday, don’t you? We all celebrate our birthday. I ask you a question, that I have already asked several times, but I’ll ask it again: who among you remembers the date of your Baptism? Raise your hands: they are few (and I am not asking the Bishops so as not to embarrass them...). Let’s do something: today, when you go home, find out what day you were baptized, look for it, because this is your second birthday. The first birthday is the day you came into life and the second birthday is the one on which you came into the Church. Will you do this? This is your

homework: find out the day on which you were born to the Church, and give thanks to the Lord, because at Baptism he has opened the door of his Church to us. At the same time, Baptism is tied to our faith in the remission of sins. The Sacrament of Penance or Confession is, in fact, like a “second baptism” that refers back always to the first to strengthen and renew it. In this sense, the day of our Baptism is the point of departure for this most beautiful journey, a journey towards God that lasts a lifetime, a journey of conversion that is continually sustained by the Sacrament of Penance. Think about this: when we go to confess our weaknesses, our sins, we go to ask the pardon of Jesus, but we also go to renew our Baptism through his forgiveness. And this is beautiful, it is like celebrating the day of Baptism in every Confession. Therefore, Confession is not a matter of sitting down in a torture chamber, rather it is a celebration. Confession is for the baptized! To keep clean the white garment of our Christian dignity!

2. The second element: “*one Baptism*”. This expression refers to that of St Paul: “one Lord, one faith, one Baptism” (Eph 4:5). The word “Baptism” literally means “immersion”, and in fact this Sacrament constitutes a true spiritual immersion in the death of Christ, from which one rises with Him like a new creation (cf. Rom 6:4). It is the washing of regeneration and of illumination. Regeneration because it actuates that birth by water and the Spirit without which no one may enter the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Jn 3:5). Illumination because through Baptism the human person becomes filled with the grace of Christ, “the true light that enlightens every man” (Jn 1:9) and dispels the shadows of sin. That is why in the ceremony of Baptism the parents are given a lit candle, to signify this illumination; Baptism illuminates us from within with the light of Jesus. In virtue of this gift the baptized are called to become themselves “light” — the light of the faith they have received — for their brothers, especially for those who are in darkness and see no glimmer of light on the horizon of their lives.

We can ask ourselves: is Baptism, for me, a fact of the past, relegated to a date, that date which you are going to go look for today, or is it a living reality, that pertains to my present, to every moment? Do you feel strong, with the strength that Christ gave you by his death and his Resurrection? Or do you feel low, without strength? Baptism gives strength and it gives light. Do you feel enlightened, with that light that comes from Christ? Are you a man or woman of light? Or are you a dark person, without the light of Jesus? We need to take the grace of Baptism, which is a gift, and become a light for all people!

3. Lastly, a brief mention of the third element: “*for the remission of sins*”. In the Sacrament of Baptism all sins are remitted, original sin and all of our personal sins, as well as the suffering of sin. With Baptism the door to an effectively new life is opened, one which is not burdened by the weight of a negative past, but rather already feels the beauty and the goodness of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the powerful intervention of God’s mercy in our lives, to save us. This saving intervention does not take away our human nature and its weakness — we are all weak and we are all sinners — and it does not take from us our responsibility to ask for forgiveness every time we err! I cannot be baptized many times, but I can go to Confession and by doing so renew the

grace of Baptism. It is as though I were being baptized for a second time. The Lord Jesus is very very good and never tires of forgiving us. Even when the door that Baptism opens to us in order to enter the Church is a little closed, due to our weaknesses and our sins. Confession reopens it, precisely because it is a second Baptism that forgives us of everything and illuminates us to go forward with the light of the Lord. Let us go forward in this way, joyfully, because life should be lived with the joy of Jesus Christ; and this is a grace of the Lord.

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### **To special groups**

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, including those from England, Scotland, Denmark, Australia, Japan, Taiwan and the United States. May Jesus Christ confirm you in faith and make you witnesses of his love and mercy to all people. God bless you all!

### **APPEAL**

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I learned with great sorrow that two days ago in Damascus mortar rounds killed several children returning home from school as well as the school bus driver. Other children were left wounded. Please, these tragedies must never happen, ever! Let us pray intensely! In these days we are praying and joining forces to help our brothers and sisters in the Philippines, struck by a typhoon. These are the true battles to fight. For life! Never for death!