HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE
BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 180418a

Wednesday 18.04.2018

General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Appeals of the Holy Father

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.30 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, 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 Baptism: 2. *The sign of Christian faith*.

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present. He then launched an appeal for a positive outcome of the spring meetings of the World Bank, which will take place in Washington D.C. next Saturday, and again invited prayer for Vincent Lambert and little Alfie Evans.

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!

Let us continue, in this Easter Time, the catechesis on Baptism. The *meaning* of Baptism is shown clearly by its *celebration*, so to this we will turn our attention. Considering the gestures and the words of the liturgy we can

grasp the grace and the commitment of this Sacrament, which is always to be rediscovered. We commemorate this in the aspersion with holy water that can be done on Sunday at the beginning of Mass, as in the renewal of the baptismal promises during the Easter Vigil. Indeed, what happens during the celebration of Baptism inspires a spiritual dynamic that runs throughout the entire life of the baptized; it is the initiation of a process that permits us to live joined with Christ in the Church. Therefore, returning to the source of Christian life leads us to understand better the gift received on the day of our Baptism and to renew the commitment to respond to it in the condition in which we find ourselves today. Renewing commitment, understanding better this gift, which is Baptism, and remembering the day of our Baptism. Last Wednesday I asked you all to do some homework, to remember the day of your Baptism, on which day you were baptized. I know that some of you know, others, no: those who do not know, ask your relatives, those people, godfathers, godmothers … ask them: "What is the date of my Baptism?" Because Baptism is a rebirth, and it is as if it were a second birthday. Do you understand? Do this homework, ask: "What is the date of my Baptism?".

First of all, in the rite of reception, the *name* of the candidate is asked, as the name indicates the identity of a person. When we introduce ourselves we immediately say our name, "I am such-and-such", so as to leave behind our anonymity, the anonymous is one without a name. To come of out this anonymity we immediately say our name. Without a name we remain unknown, without rights or duties. God calls each person by name, loving us individually, in the reality of our history. Baptism enkindles the *personal* vocation to live as Christians, which will be developed throughout our life. And it implies a *personal* response, not borrowed on loan, "copied and pasted". Indeed, Christian life is woven of a series of calls and answers: God continues to pronounce our name throughout the years, resonating in a thousand ways His call to conform to His Son Jesus. So the name is important! It is very important! Parents think of the name to give to their child even before birth: this too forms part of expecting a child who, with his own name, will have his original identity, also for the Christian life linked to God.

Certainly, becoming Christians is a gift that comes from above (cf. *Jn* 3: 3-8). Faith cannot be bought, but asked for, yes, and received as a gift, yes. "Lord, give me the gift of faith", it is a beautiful prayer". "May I have faith", it is a beautiful prayer. Ask for it as a gift, but you cannot buy it, you ask. Indeed, baptism is the sacrament of that faith, by which men, enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, respond to the Gospel of Christ (*Rite of Baptism of Infants*, General Introduction, 3). The *formation of catechumens and the preparation of parents* tend to inspire and reawaken a sincere faith in response to the Gospel, such as listening to the Word of God in the celebration of Baptism itself.

Whereas adult catechumens express firsthand what they wish to receive as a gift from the Church, children are presented by their parents, with their godparents. Dialogue with them enables them to express their wish that the children receive Baptism and to the Church the intention to celebrate it. "These purposes are expressed in action when the parents and the celebrant trace the sign of the Cross on the foreheads of the children" (*Rite of Baptism of Infants*, General Introduction, 16). "The sign of the cross, on the threshold of the celebration, marks with the imprint of Christ the one who is going to belong to Him and signifies the grace of the redemption Christ won for us by His cross" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1235). In the ceremony we make the sign of the cross on the infants. But I would like to return to an issue I have spoken to you about. Do our children know how to make the sign of the cross well? Many times I have seen children who do not know how to make the sign of the cross. And you, fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, godfathers, godmothers, must teach them to make the sign of the cross well, because it is repeating what was done in Baptism. Have you understood well? Teaching children to make the sign of the cross well. If they learn as children they will do it well later, as adults.

The cross is the badge that shows who we are: our speaking, thinking, looking, and working come under the sign of the cross, that is, the sign of Jesus' love unto the end. The children are marked on their forehead. Adult catechumens are also marked on the senses, with these words: "I sign you on the ears that you may listen to the heavenly teachings"; "On the eyes that you may see the grandeur of God"; "On the mouth that you may proclaim the word of life"; "On the breast that you may believe in God". "On the shoulders that you may take on the yoke of His service" (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, 85). One becomes Christian to the extent to which the cross is imprinted in us as a "Paschal" mark (cf. *Rev* 14: 1; 22: 4), making visible, also externally, the Christian way of facing life. Making the sign of the cross when we wake up, before meals, when faced with danger, to defend against evil, and at night before sleep means telling ourselves and others to whom we belong and whom we

want to be. This is why it is so important to teach children to make the sign of the cross well. And, just as we do when we enter the church, we can do it at home, keeping a little holy water in a small vase – some families do this: so, every time we come back or go out, making the sign of the cross with that water, we remember that we *are baptized*. Do not forget, I repeat: teach children to make the sign of the cross.

Greetings in various languages

French

I cordially greet French-speaking pilgrims, especially young French people, as well as the delegation from the Theological College of the Apostoliki Diakonia of the Church of Greece, led by Bishop Agathanghelos. Brothers and sisters, when we make the sign of the cross: when we wake up, before meals, facing danger, to protect ourselves from evil and in the evening before sleep, we express, both to ourselves and to others, to whom we belong and who we want to be. I therefore invite you to make the sign of the cross often during the day. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly those from Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the United States of America. I offer a special welcome to the group of benefactors from Ireland, with gratitude for their support of the forthcoming World Meeting of Families in Dublin. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

German

With affection I greet German-speaking and Dutch-speaking pilgrims. A special welcome to the *Pro Oriente* Foundation, the delegation of the city of Homburg and the KRO Catholic Radio and Television Group of the Netherlands. May the Holy Spirit help us live the grace of Baptism every day and make visible to our neighbours the love of Christ Who died and rose again for us. May the Lord bless you all.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims from Spain and Latin America. At this time of Easter, let us ask the Virgin Mary to help us to renew the grace of baptism that we have received, to live each day more united to Christ as members of the Church. May the Lord bless you. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

I address a cordial greeting to Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, in particular to the groups from the dioceses of Cascavel, Natal, São José do Rio Preto and São José dos Campos, encouraging everyone to be witnesses of the love that Jesus showed us with His sacrifice on the Cross. Let the cross be the sign of a life of joyful giving to others. I gladly bless you and your loved ones!

Arabic

I address a cordial greeting to Arabic speakers, especially those from Syria, Lebanon and the Middle East. Baptism gives us the grace to receive the Holy Spirit that sows in our hearts the seed of faith. It remains our responsibility to make it grow through the word of God, the Sacraments, prayer and works of charity. May the Lord bless you all and protect you from the evil one!

Polish

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims. In these days, Bible Week is taking place in Poland, with the motto: “We are filled with the Holy Spirit”. So look for each day, individually or in your family, to find some time to read and meditate on the Holy Scriptures, so that you can draw from it the strength necessary for Christian life. Let this be your commitment. Share the Word of God with others with courage, live by it every day, witnessing fidelity to Christ and His Gospel. Praised be Jesus Christ.

Croatian

I heartily greet Croatian pilgrims, including the faithful of the archdiocese of Vrhbósna, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, accompanied by their pastor, Cardinal Vínko Púljić. Dear friends, may the daily encounter and journey with the Risen Lord inflame your hearts so that, with enthusiasm, you may bear witness to the faith and proclaim the great works of God. Jesus and Mary be praised!

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking faithful.

I am pleased to welcome the participants in the Seminar promoted by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross of Rome and those at the Convention of the Focolare Movement; members of the Italian Presbyteral Commission and the deacons of the archdiocese of Milan. I sincerely hope that your pilgrimage to the tomb of Peter will make you ever more generous in your testimony of faith.

I greet the pilgrims of the Order of the Mother of God, on the eightieth anniversary of the canonization of the founder, Saint Giovanni Leonardi; the parishes; the educational institutions, in particular the Highlands Institute of Rome; the flag throwers and musicians of Asti; and the “*Musica bene comune*” Association of Rome.

I address a special thought to the young, the elderly, the sick and the newlyweds. I invite everyone to see in the Risen Jesus, alive and present among us, the true teacher of life; may His intercession obtain serenity and peace and His teaching encourage you in your daily journey towards holiness.

Appeals of the Holy Father

Next Saturday the Spring Meetings of the World Bank will take place in Washington. I encourage the efforts that, through financial inclusion, seek to promote the lives of the poorest, fostering genuine integral development respecting human dignity.

I once again draw your attention to Vincent Lambert and little Alfie Evans, and I would like to repeat and strongly confirm that the only master of life, from the beginning to the natural end, is God! And our duty, our duty is to do everything to protect life. Let us think in silence and let us pray that the life of all people be respected, and especially these two brothers of ours. Let us pray in silence.