



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 16 May 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today we conclude the series of catecheses on Baptism. The spiritual effects of this sacrament, invisible to the eye but active in the heart of one who has become a new creature, are clearly seen in the consignment of the white garment and of the lighted candle.

After the washing of regeneration, capable of recreating the person in the likeness of God in true holiness (cf. Eph 4:24), since the first centuries, it has seemed natural to clothe the baptized in a *new white garment*, reflecting the splendour of life received in Christ and in the Holy Spirit. The white garment, while symbolically expressing what has occurred in the sacrament, announces the condition of having been transfigured in divine glory.

Saint Paul recalls what it means to be clothed in Christ, when he explains *the virtues that the baptized must cultivate*: “put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another and ... forgiving each other. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (cf. Col 3:12-14).

Even the ritual consignment of the *flame drawn from the Easter candle*, recalls the effect of Baptism: “Receive the light of Christ”, says the priest. These words recall that we are not the light, but rather, the light is Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 1:9; 12:46), who, Risen from the dead, overcame the shadows of evil. We are called to receive his splendour! As the flame of the Easter candle gives light to each single candle, so the love of the Risen Lord enflames the hearts of the baptized, filling them with light and warmth. And this is why, since the first centuries, Baptism has also been called “enlightenment”, and the one who was baptized is called “enlightened”.

This is indeed the Christian vocation: “Walk always as children of the light and keep the flame of faith alive in your hearts” (*Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, n. 321; cf. Jn 12:36). If children are involved, it is the duty of the parents, together with the godfathers and godmothers, to take care to nurture the flame of baptismal grace in their little ones, helping them persevere in the faith (cf. *Rite of Baptism for Children*, n. 100). Children have the right to Christian formation, which “seeks to lead them gradually to learn God’s plan in Christ, so that they may ultimately accept for themselves the faith in which they have been baptized” (*ibid.*, Introduction, n. 3).

Christ’s living presence, which is to be safeguarded, defended and expanded in us, is the lamp which lights our steps, the light which directs our choices, the flame which warms hearts on the journey to encounter the Lord, making us capable of helping those who journey with us, until the inseparable communion with Him. From that day forth, Revelation also states, “night shall be no more; and they shall need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever” (cf. 22:5).

The celebration of Baptism concludes with the prayer of the *Our Father*, which belongs to the community of the Children of God. Indeed, children reborn in Baptism will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit fulfilled in Confirmation and will participate in the Eucharist, learning what it means to address God by calling him ‘Father’.

At the conclusion of these catecheses on Baptism, I repeat to each of you the invitation I thus expressed in the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*: “Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God; turn to him in every situation. Do not be dismayed, for the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, and holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life (cf. Gal 5:22-23)” (n. 15).

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly those from Scotland, Ireland, Egypt, Mauritius, Indonesia, Canada and the United States of America. 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!

I offer a special blessing to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. May the Marian prayer which interweaves the period of this month of May support and motivate each one to live well his or her own presence in the family and in the workplace, bearing the joy of life in Christ with the enthusiasm of disciples.

After delivering his catechesis, the Holy Father made the following appeal calling for an end to

violence.

I am very concerned about the escalation of tensions in the Holy Land and in the Middle East, and about the spiral of violence that deviates ever farther from the path of peace, dialogue and negotiation.

I express my great sorrow for the victims and the wounded and, through prayer and affection, I am close to all those who are suffering. I emphasize again that the use of violence never leads to peace. War begets war; violence begets violence.

I invite all the parties involved and the international community to renew their commitment so that dialogue, justice and peace may prevail.

Let us invoke Mary, Queen of Peace. "Hail Mary...".

May God have mercy on us!

I address my cordial best wishes for the month of Ramadan, which will begin tomorrow. May this privileged time of prayer and fasting help you to walk on the path of God which is the way of peace.