



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 25 April 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Let us continue our reflection on Baptism, always in the light of the Word of God.

The Gospel enlightens the candidates and elicits the response of faith: “Indeed Baptism is ‘the sacrament of faith’ in a particular way, since it is the sacramental entry into the life of faith” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1236). And faith is the delivery of oneself to the Lord Jesus, recognized as “a spring of water ... to eternal life” (Jn 4:14), “the light of the world” (Jn 9:5), “the resurrection and the life” (Jn 11:25), as taught by the path that catechumens approaching Christian initiation still take today. Instructed by listening to Jesus, his teachings and his work, the catechumens relive the experience of the Samaritan woman who thirsts for living water, the man born blind who opens his eyes to the light, Lazarus who walks out from the tomb. The Gospel has within it the power to transform those who accept it with faith, tearing them away from the control of the evil one so that they may learn to serve the Lord with joy and newness of life.

One never goes alone to the Baptismal font, but is accompanied by the prayers of the entire Church, as recalled in the litanies of the Saints which precede the Prayer of Exorcism and the Anointing Before Baptism, with which the catechumens are anointed with oil. These are gestures which, from antiquity, assure those who are preparing to be reborn as children of God that the prayers of the Church assist them in the battle against evil, accompany them on the path of good, help them elude the power of sin in order to enter into the kingdom of divine grace. The prayers of the Church. The Church prays, and prays for everyone, for all of us! We, the Church, pray for others. It is a beautiful thing to pray for others. Often, we have no urgent need and we do not pray. United to the Church, we must pray for others: “Lord I ask of you on behalf of those who are in need, on behalf of those who have no faith...”. Do not forget: the Church’s prayers are always in

action. But we must enter into this prayer and pray for all the People of God and for those who need prayers. For this reason, the path of adult catechumens is marked by repeated exorcisms pronounced by the priest (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1237), that is, prayers which invoke liberation from sin and from everything which separates us from Christ and prevents intimate union with him. For children too, we ask God to free them from original sin and to consecrate their dwelling in the Holy Spirit (cf. *Rite of Baptism for Children*, n. 49). Children. Praying for children, for spiritual and corporeal health. It is a means of protecting children with prayer. As the Gospels attest, Jesus himself fought and cast out the demons to manifest the advent of the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt 12:28): his victory over the power of the evil one leaves room for the Lordship of God who brings joy and reconciles with life.

Baptism is not a magical formula but a *gift of the Holy Spirit* who enables those who receive him to ‘fight against the spirit of evil’, believing that God has sent his son into the world to destroy the power of Satan and to transfer mankind from darkness into the Kingdom of infinite light (cf. *Rite of Baptism for Children*, n. 49). We know from experience that Christian life is always subject to temptation, especially to the temptation to separate oneself from God, from his will, from communion with him, to fall again into the snares of worldly seductions. And Baptism prepares us. It gives us strength for this daily struggle, even for the battle against the devil who, as Saint Peter says, tries to devour us, to destroy us like a lion.

In addition to prayer, there is also the anointing of the breast of catechumens with oil: “it strengthens the candidates with the power to renounce the devil and sin before they go to the font of life for rebirth” (*Blessing of Oils and Chrism*, Introduction n. 2). Due to the ability of oil to penetrate and benefit bodily tissues, combatants in ancient times would spread oil over their bodies to tone their muscles and to escape more easily from the grip of their adversary. In light of this symbolism, Christians in the early centuries adopted the use of anointing the bodies of Baptismal candidates with oil blessed by the Bishop¹ to show through this “sign of salvation” that the power of Christ the Saviour strengthens us to fight against evil and defeat it” (*Rite of Baptism for Children*, n. 87).

It is tiring to fight against evil, to escape its deceit, to regain strength after an exhausting battle, but we must know that all of Christian life is a battle. We must also know, however, that we are not alone, that Mother Church prays so that her children, reborn in Baptism, do not succumb to the snares of the evil one but overcome them through the power of the Paschal Christ. Fortified by the Risen Christ who defeated the prince of this world (cf. Jn 12:31), we too can repeat with the faith of Saint Paul: “I can do all things in him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13). We all can overcome, overcome anything, but with the strength that comes from Jesus.

On Friday, 27 April, in Panmunjom, there will be an Inter-Korean Summit which will be attended by the leaders of the two Koreas; Mr Moon Jae-in and Mr Kim Jong Un. This meeting will be a propitious occasion to begin a transparent dialogue and a concrete path toward reconciliation and recovered fraternity with the aim of guaranteeing peace on the Korean peninsula and in the entire world.

To the Korean peoples who fervently desire peace, I assure my personal prayers and the closeness of the entire Church. The Holy See accompanies, supports and encourages any useful and sincere initiative to build a better future in the spirit of encounter and friendship among peoples. I ask those who have direct political responsibilities to have the courage of hope by becoming 'artisans' of peace and I call them to continue with trust along the path they have begun for the good of all. And as God is the Father of peace, I invite you to pray to Our Father, God, the Father of all, for the people of Korea, those in the South and those in the North.

[*Our Father....*]

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly those from England, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, New Zealand, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, 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 greeting to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist. May his intercession support you in your journey of faith, so that his example may make you listeners and proclaimers of the Gospel of Christ, bearing witness to it with your lives.