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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Appeal of the Holy Father

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.25 a.m. in Saint 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 the theme of Baptism: *3- The strength to overcome evil.*

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 the Inter-Korean Summit.

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

It is the Gospel that illuminates candidates and inspires adhesion to 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, 1236). And faith is the surrender of oneself to the Lord Jesus, acknowledged as the "spring of water welling up to eternal life" (*Jn* 4: 14), "light of the world" (*Jn* 9: 5), "the resurrection and the life" (*Jn* 11:25), as taught on the path, even today, of catechumens now about to receive Christian initiation. Educated by listening to Jesus, by His teaching and His works, the catechumens relive the experience of the Samaritan woman thirsty for living water, of the man blind from birth who opens his eyes to the light, of Lazarus coming out of the tomb. The Gospel carries within itself the strength to transform those who welcome it with faith, tearing them from the dominion of the wicked so that they may learn to serve the Lord with joy and newness of life.

We never go the baptismal font alone, but rather we are accompanied by the prayer of the whole Church, as recalled by the litanies of the Saints preceding the prayer of exorcism and pre-baptismal anointing with the oil of the catechumens. They are gestures that, since ancient times, assure those who are preparing to be reborn as children of God that the Church's prayer will assist them in the fight against evil, accompany them on the path of good, and help them to escape the power of sin to pass into kingdom of divine grace. The prayer of the Church. The Church prays, and prays for everyone, for all of us! We Church, let us pray for others. It is a beautiful thing to pray for others. How often we have no urgent need and so we do not pray. We must pray, joined to the Church, for others: "Lord, I ask you for those who are in need, for those who do not have faith…" Do not forget: the prayer of the Church is always ongoing. But we must enter into this prayer and pray for all the people of God, and for those who are in need of prayers. For this reason, the path of adult catechumens is marked by repeated exorcisms pronounced by the priest (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1237), that is, by prayers calling for liberation from everything that separates from Christ and prevents intimate union with Him. Also for children God is asked to free them from original sin and consecrate them as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (see Rite of the Baptism of Children, 56). As the Gospels testify, Jesus Himself fought and cast out demons to manifest the coming of the kingdom of God (cf. *Mt* 12: 28): His victory over the power of the evil one leaves free space to the lordship of God Who rejoices and reconciles with life.

Baptism is not a magic formula, but a *gift from the Holy Spirit*, which enables those who receive it to fight against the "spirit of evil", believing that God "sent his only Son into the world to cast out the power of Satan … to rescue man from the kingdom of darkness and bring him into the splendour of [the] kingdom of light" (cf. *Rite of Baptism for Infants*, 56). We know from experience that Christian life is always subject to temptation, especially the temptation to separate from God, from His will, from communion with Him, to fall back into the bonds of worldly seductions. And Baptism prepares us, gives us strength for this daily struggle, even the struggle against the devil who – as Saint Peter says – like a lion tries to devour us, to destroy us.

Besides prayer, there is also the anointing on the chest with the oil of the catechumens, who "receive strength to renounce the devil and sin, before approaching the source and being reborn to new life" (*Blessing of the Oils*, Premises, 3). Because of the oil's property of penetrating into the body's tissues and bringing it benefits, ancient wrestlers used to sprinkle with oil to tone the muscles and to slip more easily from the grip of their opponents. In light of this symbolism, Christians of the first centuries adopted the custom of anointing the body of candidates for baptism with oil blessed by the bishop,[1] in order to signify, through this "sign of salvation", that the power of Christ the Saviour strengthens, to fight against evil and overcome it (cf. *Rite of the Baptism of Infants*, 105).

It is difficult to fight against evil, to escape from its deceptions, to regain strength after a tiring struggle, but we must know that all of Christian life is a fight. But we must also know that we are not alone, that the Mother Church prays so that her children, regenerated in Baptism, do not succumb to the snares of the evil one but rather defeat them by the power of the Pasch of Christ. Strengthened by the Risen Lord, 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 this through Him Who gives me strength" (*Phil* 4: 13). We can all win, win everything, but with the strength that comes to me from Jesus.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to welcome French-speaking pilgrims, especially young people; the faithful of Lille, accompanied by Msgr. Hérouard; the representatives of Catholic teaching from Créteil, accompanied by Msgr. Santier; the elected representatives of Pévèle Carembault and the seminarians of Belgium. On this feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist, I invite you always to put the Word of God in the heart of your lives. God bless you!

English

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!

German

A warm welcome to German-speaking pilgrims. In baptism, the Lord gives us the strength to overcome evil. I exhort you all: never tire of fighting against evil and of living the love of Christ! May the Holy Spirit give you His grace.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, particularly the groups from Spain and Latin America. I encourage you to persevere in this battle, standing firm in faith in Jesus Christ, conqueror of sin and death, and constant in prayer to the Father, praying for all who are in danger and suffer tribulation. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

I warmly greet Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, especially the group from Blumenau, the faithful of the parish of Nogueira/Braga and the members of the *Obra de Santa Zita*, encouraging you all to live as the baptized, imitating the Samaritan woman thirsty for living water, the man blind from birth who opens his eyes to the light and Lazarus who leaves the tomb. Do not let yourselves be robbed of your Christian identity! With these good wishes, I invoke upon you and your families and communities the abundance of the blessings of Heaven.

Arabic

I address a cordial greeting to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Egypt, Jordan and the Middle East. The Word of God illuminates our life and gives us the strength to walk according to the will of God. It is our shield in temptations, our sharp sword against the evil one and his servants. Quench your thirst every day, drawing from the inexhaustible wellspring of the Word of God. May the Lord bless you all and enlighten your way with the light of His Word and with the power of His Holy Spirit!

Polish

I welcome Polish pilgrims. In a special way I greet the archbishop of Lublin, and the College of chancellors, professors and students of the Catholic University of Lublin, who have come here on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of its founding and the 70th anniversary of the student ministry. With you I thank the Lord for all spiritual good that has been born in your university community in this centenary. I encourage you to continue the search for links between faith and reason, and at the same time to study new methods of deepening the human and natural sciences, to respond better to the challenges that the modern world poses to man and society. May your Professor Karol Wojtyla – Saint John Paul II accompany you! I warmly bless you and all the pilgrims present here. Praised be Jesus Christ!

Croatian

I greet with joy Croatian pilgrims, in particular the delegation from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Veterans of the Republic of Croatia, together with their respective ministers and officers of the general staff, the Military Academy and the State Police, accompanied by the Bishop, Monsignor Jure Bogdan. Dear friends, you have come to Rome on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the Military Ordinariate in Croatia. May God's blessing be always on you and your families, so that with the mission entrusted to you, you can bring hope and peace into society. I greet as much the pilgrims from the Eparchy of Križevci, together with the Eparca Nikola Kekić, as well as the faithful from the Archdiocese of Đakovo-Osijek. In your daily commitment God's mercy is your strength. I bless everyone! Jesus and Mary are praised!

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to the faithful of the Italian language.

I am pleased to welcome the Verbite Missionaries; the Servants of Mary Ministers to the Sick and the Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres. I encourage all to be faithful to Christ to make the joy of the Gospel shine.

I greet the confirmands of the diocese of Treviso, accompanied by their archbishop, Msgr. Gianfranco Gardin; the pilgrimage of the Gospel Groups of the Tent of the Magnificat; students; parishes; the Italian biochemical institute; the band complex of Casalbordino; the *Associazione Nuova Società Sant'Antonio di Sutri* and the former Rogationist students.

I offer a special greeting to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds. Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist. May his intercession support you in the journey of faith, so that, by his example, you may become listeners and proclaimers of the Gospel of Christ, witnessing it with your life.

Appeal of the Holy Father

Next Friday, 27 April, an Inter-Korean Summit will be held in Panmunjeom, 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 favourable opportunity to undertake a transparent dialogue and a concrete path of reconciliation and newfound fraternity, in order to guarantee peace in the Korean Peninsula and in the whole world.

To the Korean people, who ardently desire peace, I assure my personal prayer and the closeness of the whole Church. The Holy See accompanies, supports and encourages all useful and sincere initiatives to build a better future, in the name of encounter and friendship among peoples. I ask those with direct political responsibilities to have the courage of hope by becoming “artisans” of peace, while I exhort them to continue with confidence the path undertaken for the good of all. And since God is Father of all and Father of peace, I invite you to pray to our Father, God, Father of all, for the Korean people, both those in the South and those in the North.

[1] This is the prayer of blessing, expressing the meaning of this oil:: « Lord God, protector of all who believe in you, bless + this oil and give wisdom and strength to all who are anointed with it in preparation for their baptism. Bring them to a deeper understanding of the gospel, help them to accept the challenge of Christian living, and lead them to the joy of new birth in the family of your Church. We ask this through Christ our Lord. »: *Blessing of the Oils*, 21.