



The Holy See

MASS AND SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM
SISTINE CHAPEL

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 7 January 2001

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. Today's feast, which closes the Christmas season, offers us the chance to go as pilgrims in spirit to the banks of the Jordan in order to take part in a mysterious event: Jesus' Baptism by John the Baptist. We have heard the Gospel account: "When Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, *"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased"* (Lk 3: 21-22).

Jesus reveals himself, then, as the "Christ", the Only-begotten Son, the object of the Father's predilection. And so he begins his public life. This "manifestation" of the Lord follows that of the Holy Night in the humility of the crib and yesterday's meeting with the Wise Men, who in the Child adore the king foretold by the ancient Scriptures.

2. This year I again have the joy of administering, on such a significant occasion, the sacrament of Baptism to a number of infants. I greet their parents, their godparents and all the relatives who have accompanied them here.

These children will shortly become living members of the Church. They will be anointed with the oil of catechumens, the sign of Christ's gentle strength, given to them to fight against evil. Blessed water will be poured over them, an effective sign of interior purification through the gift of the Holy Spirit. They will then be anointed with chrism to show that they are thus consecrated in the image

of Jesus, the Father's Anointed One. The candle lighted from the paschal candle is a symbol of the light of faith which their parents and godparents must continually safeguard and nourish with the life-giving grace of the Spirit.

So I address you, dear parents and godparents. Today you have the joy of offering these infants the most beautiful and precious gift: new life in Jesus, the Saviour of all mankind.

From you, fathers and mothers, who have already cooperated with the Lord in bringing these little ones into the world, he asks further cooperation. He asks you to support the action of his saving Word through your commitment to the education of these new Christians. Be always ready to carry out this task faithfully.

And from you, godparents, God expects a special cooperation, which is expressed by supporting the parents in educating these infants according to the teachings of the Gospel.

3. Christian Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, makes all believers co-responsible, in the way proper to each one's specific vocation, for the Church's great mission. Everyone in his own field, with his own identity and in communion with others and with the Church, must sense his solidarity with the only Redeemer of the human race.

This brings us back to what we have just experienced in the Jubilee Year. It showed the Church's vitality to the eyes of all. For the Christian the task remains, as the legacy of this extraordinary event, of confirming his faith in the ordinary context of daily life.

Let us entrust to the Blessed Virgin these little ones who are taking their first steps in life. Let us ask her to help us, above all, to walk in conformity with the Baptism we once received. Let us also ask her that these little ones, dressed in white robes as a sign of their new dignity as God's children, may be true Christians and courageous witnesses to the Gospel throughout their lives. Praised be Jesus Christ!