



Pope Francis has urged parents to baptize their children soon after birth, thus giving them the opportunity – and the free gift - of having Jesus Christ live inside them from the beginning. He was speaking during the weekly General Audience.

Addressing the pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square for the Wednesday General Audience, the Pope focused his catechism on the intrinsic link between Easter and the Sacrament of Baptism.

### **Baptism: an unmerited gift that changes our existence**

With a special appeal to new parents he highlighted the fact that Baptism is an unmerited gift, the door to the other sacraments, thanks to which Christians are able to grow in a life of grace until reaching their true homeland in heaven.

“The baptismal font illuminates all of our life, guiding our steps toward the Jerusalem in Heaven,” he said.

He explained that “The Sacrament assumes a journey of faith, which we call the catechumenate, which is most evident when an adult asks to be baptized”, but he continued “even children, from antiquity onwards are baptized into the faith of their parents.”

Thus, he said in off-the-cuff remarks, “don’t put off baptizing your children with the excuse that ‘he or she is unable to understand”, this attitude he said indicates that “you do not trust in the Holy Spirit”.

Baptism, Francis continued, is the foundation of Christian life, a moment which marks a profound change in one's existence:

"There is a before and after baptism," he said, saying it "expresses the passage from one condition to another ... it's a sign of purification for a new beginning".

'Remember your Baptism date and celebrate it'

Therefore, he pointed out returning to a theme that is clearly dear to him, just as we all remember the date of our birth and celebrate it: "why not celebrate – or at least remember – the date of our baptism as well?".

Inviting those present to find that date out and telling them to thank the Lord for it because it marks "the day the Holy Spirit entered into our lives" Francis said: "it is our second birthday, our rebirth".

In Jesus, Francis said, "all sons of Adam are called to a new life," and "immersing us in Christ, baptism also makes us members of his body, which is the Church, and participants in its mission in the world."

The Pope concluded his catechesis saying that the baptismal promises that we renew every year in the Easter Vigil have to be reaffirmed every day, so that baptism 'Christifies' whoever has received it, rendering us truly another Christ.