



Pope Francis asked for prayers for peace in Syria and invited Christians to be joyful and grateful for the grace of Baptism. He was addressing the crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square for the Wednesday General Audience.

Pope Francis continued his catecheses focusing on the Sacrament of Baptism on Wednesday with a reflection on water, the source of life, and on how it is not possible to be both with God and with the devil.

He also had a special greeting for a group of young people from Syria and asked for prayers for peace in the world, in particular for the Middle East and Syria.

Water: source of life and wellbeing

Reflecting on the powerful symbolism of water and on how it is the source of life and wellbeing, Pope Francis noted that its absence causes the extinction of fecundity and he pointed out how it can also be a cause of death “when it submerges all things” as well as an element that cleanses and purifies.

He recalled the many instances described in the Bible and in the New Testament in which God intervenes or makes promises through ‘signs’ of water, including Jesus’ own baptism in the river Jordan and the water that flowed from his side upon the cross.

In blessing the water of the baptismal font, he explained, the Church prays it may become the source of new life in Christ and the cleansing of sin through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Though Baptism, he said, the Church invokes the action of the Holy Spirit so that those who receive the Sacrament may enter into the saving mystery of Christ’s death and

resurrection, “and with Him rise to immortal life”

But in order to do this, Francis explained, we must reject Satan and all his works.

The devil divides, God unites

Once one has been sanctified by the baptismal font, to be able to gain access to salvation, the Pope said, “one must open one’s heart” and renounce Satan.

Reminding those present that the devil is he who divides while God always unites, Francis said that it is not possible to be both with God and with the devil.

He said that one cannot adhere to Christ by “laying down conditions” but that “it is necessary to detach oneself from certain ties in order to be able to embrace others”.

The Pope said that when we decide to undertake the path of life and salvation, it is necessary to actively reject the devil and all of his works and go forth, together, in faith.

The Holy Spirit gives us the strength

As a sign of our decision to live this mystery of new and eternal life, the Pope said we are called to proclaim our faith and whenever we bless ourselves with holy water, we should recall, with gratitude, the gift that we received on the day of our Baptism.

Praying for Syria

After the catechesis the Pope had a special greeting for a group of young Syrians who arrived in Rome with a special Caritas Poland project.

The delegation aims to raise awareness about the difficulties of the poor, promote the work of volunteers and garner help for victims of persecution in Syria.

Bestowing his blessing upon them he invited them to “pray for peace in the world, in particular for the Middle East and for Syria.”