

Pope Francis kisses a child as he baptizes one of 32 babies during a Mass on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican Jan. 12, 2020. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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In asking to be baptized, Jesus exemplifies the Christian calling to follow along the path of humility and meekness rather than strutting about and being a showoff, Pope Francis said.

Addressing pilgrims in St. Peter's Square Jan. 12, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the pope said that Christ's humble act shows "the attitude of simplicity, respect, moderation and concealment required of the Lord's disciples today."

"How many — it's sad to say — of the Lord's disciples show off about being disciples of the Lord. A person who shows off isn't a good disciple. A good disciple is humble, meek, one who does good without letting himself or herself be seen," Francis said during his midday Angelus address.

The pope began the day celebrating Mass and baptizing 32 babies — 17 boys and 15 girls — in the Sistine Chapel. In his brief homily before baptizing the infants, the pope told parents that the sacrament is a treasure that gives children "the strength of the Spirit."

"That is why it's so important to baptize children, so that they grow with the strength of the Holy Spirit," he said.

"This is the message that I would like to give you today. You have brought your children here today so that they may have the Holy Spirit within them. Take care that they grow with the light, with the strength of the Holy Spirit, through catechesis, through helping them, through teaching them, through the examples that you will give them at home," he said.

As the sounds of fussy children filled the frescoed chapel, the pope repeated his usual advice to mothers of infants, encouraging them to make their children comfortable, and to not worry if they start to cry in the chapel.

"Don’t get upset; let the children cry and scream. But, if your child cries and complains, perhaps it's because they feel too hot," he said. "Take something off them, or if they are hungry, breastfeed them; here, yes, always in peace."

Later, before praying the Angelus with pilgrims, Francis said that the feast of the Lord's baptism "reminds us of our own baptism," and he asked the pilgrims to find out the date they were baptized.

"Celebrate the date of your baptism every year in your heart. Do it. It is also a duty of justice to the Lord who has been so good to us," the pope said.

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