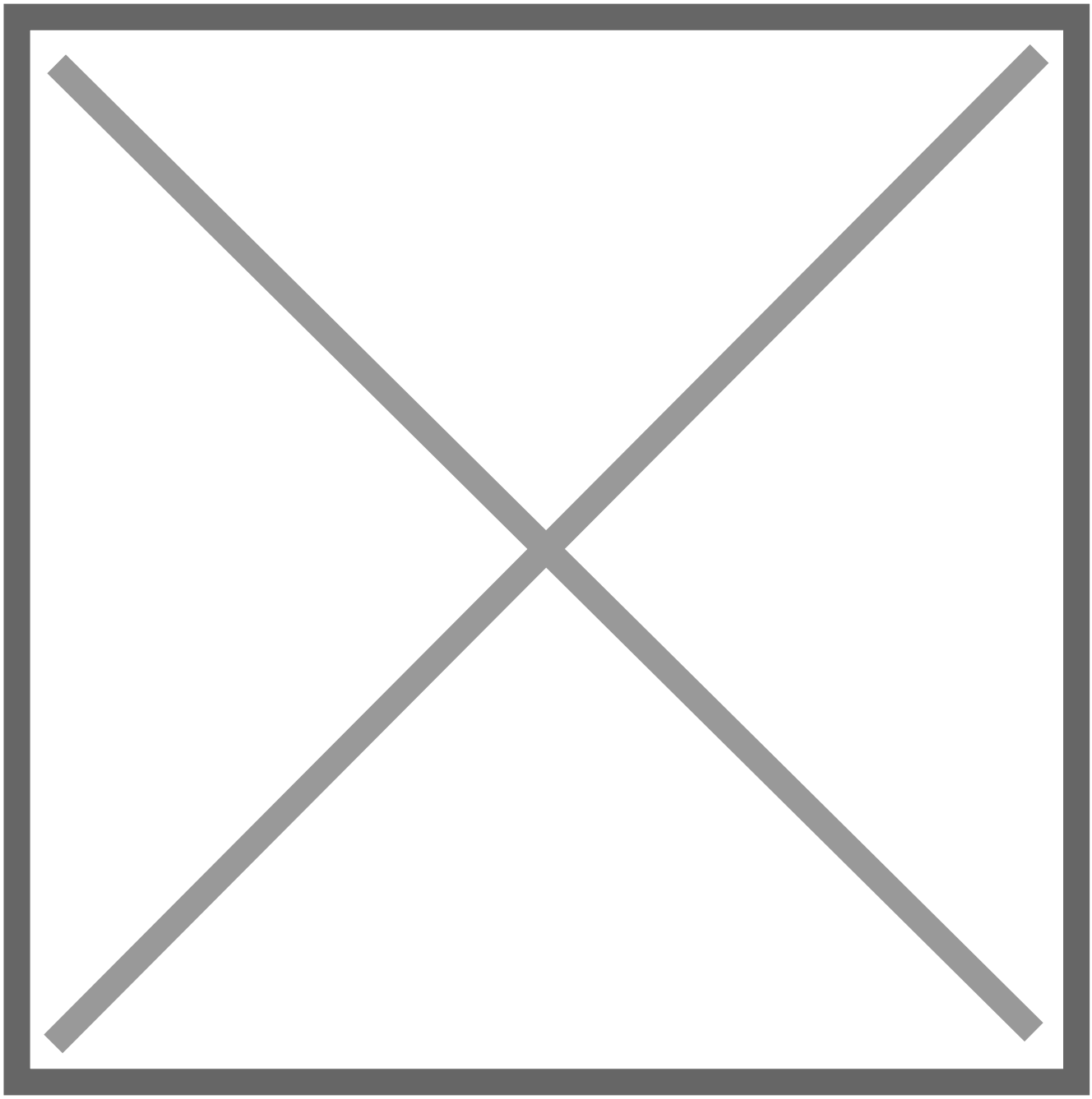
Vatican
Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis leads the Angelus prayer from the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Jan. 10, 2021. Always celebrate the date of one's baptism, which reflects God's never-ending love, the pope said. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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## Join the Conversation

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Christians are called to lead and lift people up by being close to them and sharing God's love, not by judging them, Pope Francis said.

It is the same way Jesus saves, not with "a supreme decision or a show of force, a decree, no. He saves us by coming to meet us and taking our sins upon himself," the pope said before praying his Sunday Angelus address Jan. 10, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

Traditionally, the pope would have held his annual celebration of infant baptisms in the Sistine Chapel on the feast day. However, because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the children were to be baptized in their home parishes.

The pope tweeted on his @Pontifex account that although he could not lead the celebration, "I am praying for all the children who at this time are receiving baptism, the Christian identity, the grace of forgiveness and of redemption."

In his Angelus address, which was livestreamed from the library of the Apostolic Palace, the pope talked about Jesus' baptism.

Why would Jesus insist on being baptized, which, for St. John the Baptist, had been a penitential rite, an expression of the desire for conversion and the forgiveness of sins, the pope asked. "Jesus surely did not need it," he added.

"Because he wants to be with the sinners: for this reason he gets in line with them and does the same thing they do" with bare feet and a bare soul — leaving nothing hidden, "to immerse himself in the same condition we are in," the pope said.

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On the first day of his public ministry, Jesus shows his "manifesto" with his baptism, the pope said.

"He tells us that he does not save us from on high, with a supreme decision or a show of force, a decree," he said.

God conquers the evil of the world "by humbling himself and taking charge of it," Pope Francis said. "It is also the way that we can lift up others: not by judging, not by suggesting what to do, but by being close, empathizing, sharing God's love."

Being close is God's way, and he is there wherever there is mercy and compassion, he added.

"Jesus becomes the servant of sinners and is proclaimed the Son; he lowers himself" to be with humanity and the Holy Spirit descends upon him showing that love brings more love, he said.

"It also applies to us: in each act of service, in every work of mercy we perform, God manifests himself and sets his gaze upon the world."

"Salvation is free. It is a freely given gesture of God's mercy" and while this is conferred sacramentally through baptism, it is also true that "those who are not baptized always receive God's mercy because God is there, he waits and waits so they might open the door of their heart."

God comes close to people and "caresses us with his mercy."