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Confession renews grace of baptism, pope says at audience

by Cindy Wooden by Catholic News Service

The Francis Chronicles

Vatican City — With baptism, Christians are cleansed of sin, but the sacrament doesn't wash away human weakness nor the obligation to ask forgiveness when they make mistakes, Pope Francis said.

Baptism is "God's powerful intervention in our lives to save us. This saving intervention of God doesn't remove our human nature and weakness; we are all weak and we are all sinners. And baptism doesn't remove our responsibility to ask forgiveness every time we err," the pope said Wednesday during his weekly general audience.

At the end of the audience, Pope Francis offered prayers for the victims of the typhoon in the Philippines and for those who died Monday when a mortar shell hit a school bus in Damascus, Syria.

"This must never happen! Let us pray with insistence," the pope said. The "real battles" that need to be fought in the world, he said, are not wars for power, but battles "for life, never for death."

In his main audience talk, continuing a Year of Faith series about the creed, Pope Francis reflected on the affirmation, "I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins."

As he has done on several occasions, the pope encouraged people to find out the date of their baptism and celebrate it as a "second birthday." He told the crowd he wouldn't ask the bishops present if they knew their baptismal dates "because I don't want to embarrass them."

Through baptism, he said, God gives each person a new life "that isn't weighed down by a negative past, but already contains hints of the beauty and goodness of the kingdom of heaven."

"This is beautiful," he told an estimated 45,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square. "I can't be baptized two or three or four times, but I can go to confession, and when I go to confession, I renew that grace of baptism."

"The Lord Jesus is so good that he never tires of forgiving me. Remember that! Baptism opens the doors of the church. Look up the date of your baptism. But also, when the door starts closing a bit because of our weakness and sins, confession reopens it."

"Let's go forward joyfully, OK? Because life must be lived with the joy of Jesus Christ," he said. "This is a grace from the Lord."

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