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Pope baptizes, welcomes babies into a personal relationship with Jesus

Francis X. Rocca Catholic News Service | Jan. 14, 2013
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The Sistine Chapel sounded a bit like a nursery Monday as Pope Benedict XVI baptized 20 babies, whose crying provided a constant accompaniment to the two-hour Mass on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

Referring to the day's reading from the Gospel of St. Luke, which recounts the baptism of Jesus by St. John the Baptist, Pope Benedict said that in choosing to receive the sacrament, Jesus showed he "was really immersed in our human condition; he lived it to the utmost -- although without sin -- and in such a way that he understands weakness and fragility."

The pope told the parents that their children's baptism would bring them into a "personal relationship with Jesus" that would give their lives meaning: "Only in this friendship is the great potential of the human condition truly revealed and we can experience what is beautiful and what is free."

Reminding the godparents of their duty to assist parents in raising their godchildren in the faith, Pope Benedict noted that "it is not easy to demonstrate what you believe in openly and without compromise, especially in the context in which we live, in the face of a society that often considers those who live by faith in Jesus to be old-fashioned and out of date."

Contrary to a widespread view that Christianity is "detrimental to personal fulfillment," the pope said, faith in Jesus frees us from egoism and "keeps us from being turned in on ourselves, in order to lead a full life, in communion with God and open to others."

As in previous instances of the annual tradition, the baptized babies, who this year included a pair of twins, were all children of Vatican employees and were born during the preceding three months.

"It was a moment of grace and great simplicity," said Alessandro Gisotti, whose daughter, Maria Teresa, was one of those baptized. He said the event required no special preparation, apart from a rehearsal two days earlier, led by the pope's master of liturgical ceremonies, Msgr. Guido Marini.

Gisotti, a journalist at Vatican Radio, and his wife, Nicole, were accompanied by their son, Andrea Karol, 4, who received a special blessing from the pope after the Mass.

That evening the Gisotti family celebrated with friends at their parish in the seaside community of Ostia, about 18 miles southwest of Vatican City.

His pastor had happily given permission for Maria Teresa to receive the sacrament in another church, Gisotti said, since "of course, pope is the pastor of us all."

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