



FOLLOWING CHRIST IN FAITH IS NOT NEGOTIABLE, Say Pope Francis

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VATICAN CITY -

Following Christ with total submission in faith is not negotiable, hence Christians must cut off from sin and the devil, the Holy Father Pope Francis has declared. The Pope made this assertion during one of his recent Wednesday Catechesis on the Sacrament of Baptism at the Vatican City, Rome.

The Holy Father stated that A person cannot put conditions on how they follow Christ, he said, explaining that “it is necessary to detach oneself from certain bonds in order to be able to really embrace others; either you’re good with God or you’re good with the devil.” He added: “To the extent that I say ‘no’ to the suggestions of the devil – he who divides – I am able to say ‘yes’ to God who calls me to conform to Him in thoughts and deeds.”

Pope Francis emphasized the importance of the act of renunciation during the baptismal rite – when the candidate for Baptism, or the parents in the case of a child, proclaims his or her rejection of Satan and affirms belief in Christ and the Church. These two things, the renunciation and act of faith, “go together,” he added.

He continued: “The answer to the questions – ‘Do you give up Satan, all his works, and all his seductions?’ – is formulated in the first person singular: ‘I renounce.’ And in the same way the faith of the Church is professed, saying: ‘I believe.’ I renounce, and I believe: this is the basis of Baptism.”

The Pope added that it is necessary to “sever bridges” in order to undertake “the new Way that is Christ,” he said, noting that our act of faith gives us strength to weather the trials of life. Francis also quoted from the Book of Sirach, which says: “Son, if you present yourself to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation.”

The Holy Father also reflected on the symbolism of the water used in the baptismal rite, explaining that in the Bible, the interventions and promises of God are described through the sign of water.

Francis pointed out a few examples, such as the great flood; when Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea so the Israelites could escape from Egypt; and Jesus’ Baptism in the Jordan.

On one hand, he said, water is “the matrix of life and well-being,” and the lack of it prevents flowering and growth. Water also washes, cleanses, and purifies. On the other hand, the same water “can also be a cause of death, when it

submerges [someone or something] in its waves or overwhelms everything in large quantities.”

The power of the water used in the sacrament of Baptism does not come from the water itself, however, but from the Holy Spirit, which gives effectiveness to the action of the water, he said. Quoting from the Rite of the Baptism of Children, the Pope said, “therefore the Church invokes the action of the Spirit on water ‘so that those who receive Baptism will be buried with Christ in death and resurrect with him to eternal life.’”

In conclusion, Pope Francis encouraged Christians, when they touch the holy water and make the sign of the cross upon entering a church, to remember their Baptism “with joy and gratitude,” and “to live immersed in the love of the Most Holy Trinity.”