

Think and Live According to Faith

Following is Pope Paul's address to the general audience at St. Peter's on April 28:

We are still in the spiritual sphere of Easter, which has in our baptism the most significant ritual expression and the most decisive



regenerating efficacy for our religious and moral life. The celebration of Easter must revive in us awareness of baptism received. Therefore, we wish to reawaken in us, in the period following Easter, the way of thinking and living characteristic of one who knows he has been baptized.

Let us recall the theology of baptism, which deserves study and meditation throughout our entire life. It reminds us of our whole religious history. Having come to the world in an unhappy condition as regards our relationship with the true and superior source of life, which is the living God, because of original sin, we have been purified from it and restored to grace, supernatural life, by means of Christ, our Savior and Brother, who died and rose again for us, with whom we have been associated with baptism, in the Holy Spirit, and this given a place in that "fellowship in the spirit" (Phil 2, 1), which the Church is. We know this and we

should know it better and better and grow in this marvellous knowledge (Phil 1, 9).

But now let us pause at the overall awareness of our belonging to this divine plan of our salvation, into which baptism has introduced us. We refer, in simple language, to the subjective aspect of the paschal mystery, not only liturgically recalled to us by Easter, just celebrated, but accomplished in us, when we had the supreme good fortune to be baptized.

It would be interesting to collect the testimonies of the neophyte saints, beginning with the very well-known one of St. Augustine, hasty and almost timid: "... and we were baptized", he writes in the Confessions (IX, 6) "and all apprehension of our past life disappeared from us. And I never tired in those days of admirable sweetness of considering the depth of your plan, (Oh Lord) about the salvation of man-kind. How much I wept at your hymns and canticles." The testimonies of converts (for example, that of Papini) are similar. Moreover the wise catechism of the Council of Trent, always relevant, admonishes us of the usefulness of the reflection (II, 2, 2), to which we are led by the great words, which the authors define "the master idea of St. Paul's theology," and which run as follows: "He who through faith is righteous shall live" (Rom 1, 17; Gal 3, 11). They raise for every Christian the doctrine and the precept of the derivation from faith, received and professed with baptism, of the inspiring and original principle of the whole of Christian life.

"Faith is the acceptance of the Gospel, and believing means professing Christianity."

What conclusions can we draw from these brief references? Two, it seems to us. The first conclusion is that of the duty, a very agreeable duty, if we experience it, of modelling our mentality on these doctrines and on the norms, nay rather the graces, derived from baptismal awareness. We cannot think in a Christian way without having recourse to this new and luminous knowledge of our existence. "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ.

It is necessary, therefore, to revise our way of thinking and living according to the faith, in the light of which baptism has placed us. Hence the second conclusion, that of enjoying a particular spiritual state, characteristic of the Christian, of the perpetual neophyte, who has come into the kingdom of Christ, the spiritual state of certainty, clarity, light. "For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord", St. Paul again admonishes us. (Eph 5, 8). "We are no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (ib. 4, 14). Faith is a light, it is a force (1 Pet 5, 9). It is the logic, it is the charism of our baptism.



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