

Dear brothers and sisters,
1 Today we have baptized two children and five adults. All of the adult new Christians have expressed their Christian faith with a brief confession. Mohammed and Rosella, who are taking part in our "Baptism Plus" program today, will also do this soon. This morning I would like to share three things that are especially important to me in my faith right now, based on these passages from Scripture.

أيها الإخوة والأخوات الأحباء!
1. اليوم عمّدنا طفلين وخمسة بالغين. وقد عبّر جميع البالغين الذين تعمّدوا عن إيمانهم باعتراف شخصي. وسيقوم محمد وروزيلا بذلك أيضًا لاحقًا. واليوم أود أن أشارككم ثلاثة أمور مهمة عن الإيمان مستندة إلى ثلاث آيات من الكتاب المقدس.

2 God says: *"As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you."* (Isaiah 66:13a) Three weeks ago, Anette and I visited our daughter Davina and our grandson Junis in Hamburg. Junis is one and a half years old. He is no longer a baby and already walks very well. We spent time together at a playground, where Junis climbed on the play equipment and played in the sand.

2. يقول الله: «سأعزيكم كما تعزي الأم طفلها». قبل ثلاثة أسابيع زرنا أنا وزوجتي ابنتنا دافينا وحفيدنا يونس في هامبورغ. يبلغ من العمر سنة ونصف، وأصبح يمشي بشكل جيد.

3 I thoroughly enjoyed playing with him using his sand toys. He could see that his mother trusted me - her father - and because of that, Junis trusted me too, even though he does not see me very often. But when he fell over and started crying, Grandpa was no longer enough. Then Junis wanted only to be in his mother's arms, and there he was quickly comforted.

3. في ساحة اللعب لعبت مع يونس في الرمل. وقد وثق بي لأنه رأى أن أمه تثق بي. ولكن عندما وقع وبكى، لم يرد إلا أن تحمله أمه، وهناك وجد التعزية فوراً.

4 The relationship between my daughter and her son reminds me of the relationship between Jesus and us. Davina always kept an eye on Junis, even when she looked at her phone for a moment, and she was immediately there whenever he cried. That is how it is with Jesus and us. He watches over us, and when we are afraid or in trouble, he is there. He takes us into his arms and protects us.

4. هذا يذكرني بعلاقتنا مع يسوع.
فكما أن الأم لا تغفل عن طفلها، كذلك
يسوع يهتم بنا دائماً. وعندما نخاف أو
نتألم، يكون معنا ويمنحنا التعزية
والحماية.

5 Junis has complete trust in his mother. Whenever something happens, he turns to her first for help and comfort. Applied to our relationship with Jesus, that is what faith means: bringing everything that weighs us down or frightens us to Jesus and expecting help and strength from Him before anyone else. Junis does not understand everything his mother does.

5. يونس يلجأ أولاً إلى أمه عندما يحتاج إلى المساعدة. وهكذا يكون الإيمان أيضاً، بأن نأتي إلى يسوع بكل ما يثقلنا وننتظر منه العون والقوة. وحتى إن لم نفهم كل شيء، فإننا نتق بأنه يريد الخير لنا.

6 For example, when she puts his play trousers on before he goes into the sandbox so he will not get dirty, he does not like it. But in the end, he lets her do it because he knows that his mother wants what is best for him. It is the same with us and Jesus. We cannot always understand everything we experience in the light of His love. Yet we trust that everything he does for us comes from His love for us.

6. فالطفل الصغير يحتاج إلى والديه في كل شيء. وكذلك نحن نحتاج إلى يسوع في حياتنا، رغم أننا لا نراه. فهو دائماً معنا ويحقق وعده: «سأعزّيكم كما تعزّي الأم طفلها».

7 Jesus is our Lord, and we are his children. A toddler who can already walk but still depends on his mother or father for comfort, help, and support is, to me, a wonderful picture of us. We cannot see Jesus, yet we need Him in everything. He is always with us and always there for us. *"As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you."* (Isaiah 66:13a)

7. أما الآية الثانية فتقول: «الرب أمين، وسيقويكم ويحفظكم من الشرير». في كل صباح أصلي وأرغم ترنيمة تشكر الله على حمايته.

8 "The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one." (2 Thessalonians 3:3) Every morning during my prayers I sing a hymn, for example the morning hymn God of Heaven and Earth (EG 445). The second verse says:

"God, I thank you from my heart
That throughout this night you kept me
Safe from danger, fear, distress, and pain,
And that the evil enemy's deceit
Has gained no power over me."
That last line means: evil has not gained power over me.

8. تذكرني هذه الترنيمة بأن الله
حفظني أثناء الليل من الخوف
والشر. وأنا أعيش في سلام
وأمان، ولذلك أشكره.

9 Now, I sleep well, I am healthy, and I do not live in a country at war, so my nights are generally quite safe. Yet these words came back to me as I looked back on the development of our international congregation. There were times when it was not at all certain that this church would have a future. People who did not look favorably on it almost prevailed.

9. كما أن كنيستنا الدولية مرت بأوقات صعبة. فقد كان هناك أناس أرادوا إلحاق الضرر بها. لكن الله أعاننا، ولذلك استمرت الكنيسة.

10 Thinking about this, I thanked God that "the evil enemy's deceit has gained no power over me". Our Kreuzkirche will continue on a good path into the future. Often we simply face problems and obstacles. But sometimes it is more than that. There are destructive powers that threaten us. They are driven by evil intentions, even if those involved are not aware of it themselves.

10. ليست هناك مشاكل فقط، بل توجد أحيانًا قوى مدمرة ذات نوايا شريرة. نراها في السياسة، وفي الحروب، وأيضًا في حياتنا الشخصية.

11 We see this "deceit of the evil enemy" in politics, where - as in many of your home countries - brutal dictators oppress and threaten their people. But even in the smaller settings of everyday life there are evil intentions that wound lives and damage faith. Who helps us in such difficult situations? *"The Lord is faithful. He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one."*

11. في مثل هذه الظروف يمكننا أن نثق بيسوع. فهو يمنحنا القوة ويمنع الشر من أن يسيطر على حياتنا.

12 Jesus is able to help us. We do not carry His protection as though it were an absolute guarantee that nothing bad can ever happen. We still experience fear and often do not know how things will turn out. But we call on Jesus and trust that, especially in dangerous situations, He will make sure that evil does not gain power over us.

12. وهذا لا يعني أن المسيحيين لا يشعرون بالخوف أبدًا، بل إنهم يصلّون إلى يسوع ويثقون بأنه سيحملهم خلال كل خطر.

13 So far we have spoken about faith - that Jesus comforts us like a mother and protects us from evil. But Christian faith is also about how we live. *"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children, and walk in the way of love."*

(Ephesians 5:1–2)

13. أما الفكرة الثالثة فهي من رسالة أفسس: «اقتدوا بيسوع، واجعلوا حياتكم كلها مملوءة بالمحبة». فالمسيحي لا يؤمن فقط، بل يعيش أيضًا بحسب إيمانه.

14 The Letter to the Ephesians gives practical instructions for husbands, wives, and slaves. These words were written two thousand years ago for a society in which the submission of women to men and slavery were taken for granted. What is remarkable is that Christian love enters precisely into those relationships of inequality. Men and women, slaves and masters alike are all called to live in love.

14. كانت التعليمات آنذاك موجهة إلى مجتمع فيه عبودية وكانت مكانة المرأة مختلفة. ومع ذلك كانت محبة يسوع هي الأساس منذ ذلك الوقت.

15 Today, both slavery and the legal subordination of women have, not least through the influence of Christianity, become things of the past in Germany. What we can still learn from these instructions is this: Christians can live faithfully in every age, every culture, and every social setting. Living as a Christian does not mean that Christians in every time and place must all do exactly the same things.

15. أما اليوم فنحن نعيش في مجتمع مختلف. فالعبودية وخضوع المرأة للرجل أصبحا من الماضي في ألمانيا. لكن محبة يسوع تبقى صالحة لكل زمان.

16 Nor does it simply mean following the standards of either a traditional or a modern society. Living as a Christian means shaping our lives according to Jesus and fulfilling the values of our own culture in a spirit of love.

16. أن تكون مسيحيًا لا يعني فقط اتباع قوانين المجتمع، بل أن تعيش بمحبة على مثال يسوع، مهما كان الزمان أو الثقافة.

17 Let me give one example. An adult Christian may be married or divorced. He or she may live alone or have relationships that are shorter in duration. The decisive question is not the outward circumstances in which someone lives as a Christian. What matters is what he or she makes of those circumstances: whether they are lived in trust in Jesus and with Jesus as their example.

17. قد يكون المسيحي متزوجًا أو
مطلقًا أو يعيش بمفرده. فالمهم ليس
وضعه الخارجي، بل كيف يعيش مع
يسوع وبالمحبة.

18 God says: "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you." Like a loving mother, Jesus is there for us. "The Lord is faithful. He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one." With Jesus, evil does not gain power over us - and that is our prayer. "Follow God's example... and walk in the way of love." To live with Jesus and to live in love - that is what the Christian life is all about. Amen!

18. الله يعزينا كما تعزي الأم طفلها.
ويسوع يمنحنا القوة ويحفظنا من
الشر. وعندما نتبعه ونعيش بالمحبة،
نحقق معنى الحياة المسيحية الحقيقي.
آمين.