



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Appeal of the Holy Father

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.25 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, where the Holy Father Francis met with groups of pilgrims and faithful from Italy and all over the world.

In his address in Italian the Pope began a new cycle of catechesis on the Sacrament of Confirmation, focusing of Christian witness (Bible reading from the Gospel of Saint Luke 4: 16-18).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present.

The General Audience concluded with the recital of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

After the catechesis on Baptism, these days that follow the solemnity of Pentecost invite us to reflect on the testimony that the Spirit inspires in the baptized, putting their lives in motion, opening it to the good of others.

Jesus entrusted to His disciples a great mission: “You are the salt of the earth ... you are the light of the world” (cf. Mt 5: 13-16). These are images that make us think of our behaviour, because both the lack of salt and the excess of salt make food disgusting, just as the lack and the excess of light prevent us from seeing. Only the Spirit of Christ can really make us salt that gives flavour and preserves from corruption, and light that enlightens the world! And this is the gift we receive in the Sacrament of Confirmation or *Cresima*, on which I wish to stop and reflect with you. It is called “*Confirmation*” because it confirms Baptism and strengthens its grace (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1289); and [in Italian] also as “*Cresima*”, from the fact that we receive the Spirit through anointing with “*chrism*” – oil mixed with a perfume consecrated by the bishop – a term that refers to “*Christ*”, the Anointed by the Holy Spirit.

Rebirth in divine life in Baptism is the first step; it is then necessary to behave as children of God, or rather to conform oneself to Christ Who works in the holy Church, allowing oneself to be involved in its mission in the world. This is what the anointing by the Holy Spirit provides: “Without His strength, man is nothing” (cf. Sequence of Pentecost). Without the strength of the Holy Spirit, we cannot do anything: it is the Spirit Who gives us the strength to go on. Just as all the life of Jesus was inspired by the Spirit, so the life of the Church too, and of each of her members, is under the guidance of the same Spirit.

Conceived by the Virgin through the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus undertakes His mission after, coming out of the waters of the Jordan, He is consecrated by the Spirit that descends and remains on Him (cf. *Mk* 1: 10; *Jn* 1: 32). He declares it explicitly in the synagogue of Nazareth: it is beautiful how Jesus presents Himself, Jesus’ identity card in the synagogue of Nazareth! Let us listen to how He does it: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me; because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor” (*Lk* 4: 18). Jesus presents Himself in the synagogue of His village as the Anointed one, He Who has been anointed by the Spirit.

Jesus is filled with of the Holy Spirit, and is the wellspring of the Spirit promised by the Father (cf. *Jn* 15: 26; *Lk* 24: 49); *Acts* 1: 8; 2: 33). In reality, the evening of the Passover the Risen Christ breathed on the disciples and told them: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (*Jn* 20: 22); and on the day of Pentecost the power of the Spirit descends on the apostles in an extraordinary form (cf. *Acts* 2: 1-4), as we know.

The “breath” of the Risen Christ fills the lungs of the Church with life; and indeed, the mouths of the disciples, “filled with the Holy Spirit”, open up to proclaim to all the great works of God (cf. *Acts* 2: 1-11).

Pentecost – which we celebrated last Sunday – is for the Church what was for Christ the anointing with the Spirit received in the Jordan; or rather, Pentecost is the missionary impulse to consume one’s life for the sanctification of mankind, for the glory of God. The Spirit it is at work in every Sacrament, but in a special way in Confirmation, in which “the faithful receive as a Gift the Holy Spirit” (Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Divinae consortium naturae*). And in the moment of anointment, the bishop says this word: “Receive the Holy Spirit that is given to you as a gift”; it is the great gift of God, the Holy Spirit. And we all have the Spirit within. The Spirit is in our heart, in our soul. And the Spirit guides us in life so that we become the right salt and the right light for mankind.

If in Baptism it is the Holy Spirit that immerses us in Christ, in Confirmation it is Christ Who fills us with His Spirit, consecrating His witnesses, partakers in the same principle of life and mission, according to the plan of the Heavenly Father. The testimony given by the confirmed manifests the reception of the Holy Spirit and docility to His creative inspiration. I wonder, how can we see if we have received the Gift of the Spirit? If we carry out the works of the Spirit, if we pronounce words taught by the Spirit (cf. *1 Cor* 2: 13). Christian witness consists in doing only and all what the Spirit of Christ asks of us, granting us the strength to achieve this.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to greet pilgrims from France, Gabon, Canada and various French-speaking countries, in particular members of the *Militia Christi* and the youth of Neuilly, Châteaubriant and Paris. May the testimony given by the confirmed make manifest the reception of the Holy Spirit and docility to His creative inspiration! God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly those from England, Wales, Ireland, India, the Philippines, Russia, Vietnam, Canada and the United States of America. In the continuing joy of our celebration of Pentecost, I invoke upon you and your families a rich outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord bless you all!

German

A warm welcome to German-speaking pilgrims, especially to the many groups of young people. In the sacrament of Confirmation, the Lord has given you the power of the Holy Spirit. You can therefore truly be salt for this earth and light of our world. God bless you all!

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims from Spain and Latin America. With the still recent memory of the recent celebration of Pentecost, let us ask the Virgin Mary to help us be docile to the Holy Spirit, so that we will be able to give those around us a living testimony of holiness and love, dedicating ourselves at all times to the good of others. May the Lord bless you. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

Dear Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, I extend a cordial welcome to you all, especially to groups from Portugal and Brazil. Remember to thank the Lord for the gift of the sacrament of Confirmation, asking Him to help you to live always as true Christians, to confess everywhere the name of Christ! May the Blessing of the Lord descend upon you!

Arabic

I extend a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East! Dear brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit teaches us and gives us the wisdom and truth of Christ. Let us call upon Him more often, so that he may guide us on the path of the true disciples of Jesus. May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I welcome Polish pilgrims. In particular I greet the delegation of foresters, with the Directorate General of National Forests of Poland. They brought with them a hundred oak seedlings which, on the centenary of Poland's independence, will be planted as a sign of commitment to the protection of creation. Dear brothers and sisters, as I wrote in *Laudato si'*, "There is nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us. ... All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings"(211). I bless you all from the heart.

Ukrainian

I greet the Ukrainian pilgrims who have participated in the 60 th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes. I pray to the Lord ceaselessly that He may heal the wounds inflicted by war and bestow His peace upon the dear Ukrainian land. God bless you all!

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking faithful.

I am pleased to welcome the participants in the General Chapter of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart; the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Pauline Co-operators. I invite each one of you to support the voice of the Holy Spirit, through practical acts of goodness.

I greet the Clericus Cup Group, the Parishes of *San Nicola di Bari* in Polvica di Chiaiano and the Pastoral Unit of Castel del Piano Pila in Perugia; student groups, especially those of the Mary Help of Christians School in Rome; the Faculty of Civil and Industrial Engineering of the “La Sapienza” University of Rome, and the Volunteer Fire Department of Bondeno.

In particular I entrust to Our Lady the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds who are present here today. I urge you all to treasure the prayer of the Holy Rosary in this month of May. Let us invoke the intercession of Mary, so that the Lord may grant peace and mercy to the Church and to the whole world.

Appeal of the Holy Father

Tomorrow, 24 May, will be the annual Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, particularly venerated in the Shrine of Sheshan, near Shanghai in China.

This feast invites us to be spiritually joined with all the Catholic faithful who live in China. Let us pray to Our Lady for them, so that they may live faith with generosity and serenity, and so that they may be able to carry out concrete gestures of fraternity, harmony and reconciliation, in full communion with the Successor of Peter.

Dearest disciples of the Lord in China, the universal Church prays with you and for you, so that even amid difficulties you may continue to entrust yourselves to the will of God. The help of Our Lady will not be lacking, and she will protect you with her mother’s love.
