



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 29 May 2024

[Multimedia]

The following text includes parts that were not read out loud, but should be considered as such.

Cycle of Catechesis. The Spirit and the Bride. The Holy Spirit guides. the people of God towards Jesus our hope. 1. *The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today, with this catechesis we begin a series of reflections with the theme, “The Holy Spirit and the Bride” — the Bride is the Church — “The Holy Spirit guides God’s people towards Jesus our hope”. We will make this journey through the three great stages of salvation history: the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the time of the Church. Always keeping our gaze fixed on Jesus, who is our hope.

In these first catecheses on the Spirit in the Old Testament, we will not do “biblical archaeology”. Instead, we will discover that what is given as a promise in the Old Testament has been fully realised in Christ. It will be like following the path of the sun from dawn to noon.

Let us begin with the first two verses of the entire Bible: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of

the deep; and *the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters*” (*Gen 1:1-2*). The Spirit of God appears to us here as the mysterious power that moves the world from its initial formless, deserted, and gloomy state to its ordered and harmonious state, because the Spirit makes harmony, harmony in life, harmony in the world. In other words, it is He who makes the world pass from chaos to the cosmos, that is, from confusion to something beautiful and ordered. This, in fact, is the meaning of the Greek word *kosmos*, as well as the Latin word *mundus*, that is, something beautiful, something ordered, clean, harmonious, because the Spirit is harmony.

This still vague hint of the Holy Spirit’s action in creation becomes more precise following the revelation. In a psalm we read: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and *all their host by the breath of his mouth*” (*Ps 33:6*); and again: “*When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the ground*” (*Ps 104:30*).

This line of development becomes very clear in the New Testament, which describes the Holy Spirit’s intervention in the new creation, using precisely the images that one reads about in connection with the origin of the world: the dove that hovers over the waters of the Jordan at Jesus’ baptism (cf. *Mt 3:16*); Jesus who, in the Upper Room, breathes on the disciples and says: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (*Jn 20:22*), just as in the beginning God breathed His breath on Adam (cf. *Gen 2:7*).

The Apostle Paul introduces a new element into this relationship between *the Holy Spirit and creation*. He speaks of a universe that groans and suffers as in labour pains (cf. *Rom 8:22*). It suffers because of man who has subjected it to the bondage of corruption (cf. vv. 20-21). It is a reality that concerns us closely and dramatically. The Apostle sees the cause of the suffering of creation in the corruption and sin of humanity that has dragged it into its alienation from God. This remains as true today as it was then. We see the havoc that has been done, and that continues to be wrought upon creation by humanity, especially that part of it that has greater capacity to exploit its resources.

Saint Francis of Assisi shows us a way out, a beautiful way, to return to the harmony of the Creator Spirit: the way of contemplation and praise. He wanted a canticle of praise to the Creator to be raised by the creatures. We recall, “*Praised be You, my Lord...*”, the canticle of Francis of Assisi.

One of the psalms (19:1) says, “*The heavens are telling the glory of God*”, but they need men and women to give voice to this mute cry of theirs. And in the “*Sanctus*” of the Mass we repeat each time: “Heaven and earth are full of your glory”. They are, so to speak, “pregnant” with it, but they need the hands of a good midwife to give birth to this praise of theirs. Our vocation in the world, Paul again reminds us, is to be “*praise of his glory*” (*Eph 1:12*). It is to put the joy of contemplating ahead of the joy of possessing. And no one has rejoiced in creatures more than Francis of Assisi, who did not want to possess any of them.

Brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit of God, who in the beginning transformed chaos into cosmos, is at work to bring about this transformation in every person. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God promises: “*A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you... And I will put my spirit within you*” (Ez 36:26-27). For our heart resembles that deserted, dark abyss of the first verses of Genesis. Opposed feelings and desires stir within it: those of the flesh and those of the spirit. We are all, in a sense, that kingdom “divided against itself” that Jesus talks about in the Gospel (cf. *Mk 3:24*). We can say that there is an external chaos around us — social chaos, political chaos. Think of wars, think of so many boys and girls who don’t have enough to eat, about so many social injustices. This is the external chaos. But there is also an internal chaos: internal to each of us. The former cannot be healed unless we begin to heal the latter! Brothers and sisters, let us do a good job of making our internal confusion a clarity of the Holy Spirit. It is the power of God that does this, and we open our hearts so that he can do it.

May this reflection stir in us the desire to experience the Creator Spirit. For more than a millennium, the Church has put on our lips the cry to ask for it: “*Veni creator Spiritus! Come, O Creator Spirit! Visit our minds. Fill with heavenly grace the hearts you have created*”. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to come to us and make us new persons, with the newness of the Spirit. Thank you.

Special Greetings

I want to offer assurance of my prayers for the victims of the great landslide that swept through some villages in Papua New Guinea. May the Lord comfort the family members, those who have lost their homes, and the Papuan people, whom, God willing, I will meet next September.

Last Sunday in Novara, Father Joseph Rossi, priest and martyr, was beatified. A parish priest who was zealous in charity, he did not abandon the flock during the tragic period of World War II but defended it even to the shedding of his blood. May his heroic witness help us to face the trials of life with fortitude. Let us applaud the new Blessed!

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially the groups from England, the Netherlands, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Korea, Thailand, and the United States of America. I invoke upon you and your families the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Finally, my thoughts go to young people, to the sick, to the elderly and to newlyweds. Today we celebrate the liturgical memorial of Saint Paul VI, a pastor burning with love for Christ, for the Church and for humanity. May this anniversary help everyone rediscover the joy of being Christians, inspiring a renewed commitment to building the civilisation of love. And please, if you have some time, read Paul VI’s letter, “*Evangeliij Nuntiandi*”, which is still relevant today.

My thoughts go to martyred Ukraine. The other day I welcomed little boys and girls who have suffered burns, lost their legs in the war. War is always cruel. These little boys and girls have to start walking, to move with artificial arms... they have lost their smiles. It is very bad, very sad when a child loses his or her smile. Let us pray for the Ukrainian children. And let us not forget Palestine and Israel where there is so much suffering: may the war end. And let us not forget Myanmar, and so many countries that are at war. Children suffer, children in war suffer. Let us pray to the Lord to be close to all and give us the grace of peace. Amen.

My blessing to all!

Summary of the Holy Father's words

Dear brothers and sisters: Today we begin a new series of catecheses on “The Spirit and the Bride,” focusing on how the Holy Spirit guides God’s people throughout salvation history. From the very beginning, the Spirit of God is at work, bringing order and beauty out of chaos. This ongoing transformation is fully realized in Jesus Christ. Saint Paul tells us that “creation has been groaning in travail,” (*Rom 8:22*) a reality that remains true, and emphasizes our need to address both our internal and external chaos. In light of this, Saint Francis of Assisi offers contemplation and praise as a remedy and demonstrates how to embrace creation freely. Let us then invite the Spirit of God into our lives, to transform our hearts and heal our world: “Come Holy Spirit, Creator come, enlighten our minds and fill with heavenly grace the hearts you have created.”