



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Wednesday, 7 August 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. 5. *Incarnate by the work of the Holy Spirit, from the Virgin Mary. How to conceive and bear Jesus*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

With today's catechesis, we enter into the second phase of salvation history. After contemplating the Holy Spirit in the work of Creation, we will contemplate it for a few weeks in the work of Redemption, namely of Jesus Christ. So, let us move on to the New Testament, and see the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

Today's theme is the Holy Spirit in the Incarnation of the Word. In the Gospel of Luke, we read: "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you*" — to Mary — "*and the power of the Most High will overshadow you*" (1:35). The evangelist Matthew confirms this fundamental fact that regards Mary and the Holy Spirit, saying that Mary "*was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit*" (1:18).

The Church took up this revealed fact and very soon positioned it at the heart of her Symbol of

faith. In the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, in 381 — which defined the divinity of the Holy Spirit — this article enters into the formula of the “Creed”, the Nicene-Constantinople Creed, which we recite in every Mass. It states that the Son of God “by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man”.

It is therefore an *ecumenical* fact of faith, because all Christians profess together that same Symbol of faith. Catholic piety, since time immemorial, has drawn from it one of its daily prayers, the Angelus.

This article of faith is the foundation that enables us to speak of Mary as the quintessential *Bride*, who is a *figure of the Church*. Indeed, Jesus, as Saint Leo the Great writes, “born of a virgin mother by the action of the Holy Spirit, Christ keeps his Church spotless and makes her fruitful by the inspiration of the same Spirit” (12th Sermon on the Passion, 3, 6: PL 54, 356). This parallelism is taken up in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II, which says: “By her belief and obedience, [Mary] brought forth on earth the very Son of the Father, showing an undefiled faith, not in the word of the ancient serpent, but in that of God’s messenger... The Church indeed, contemplating her hidden sanctity, imitating her charity and faithfully fulfilling the Father’s will, by receiving the Word of God in faith becomes herself a mother. By her preaching she brings forth to a new and immortal life the sons who are born to her in baptism, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God” (no. 63-64).

Let us conclude with a practical reflection for our life, suggested by the Scripture’s insistence on the verbs “to conceive” and “to bear”. In the prophecy of Isaiah we hear: “*Behold a young woman shall conceive and bear a son*” (7:14), and the Angel says to Mary, “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son” (Lk 1:31). Mary first conceived, then bore Jesus: first she welcomed him into herself, in her heart and her flesh, then she gave birth to him.

This happens also for the Church: first she welcomes the Word of God, letting it “speak tenderly to her” (cf. *Hos 2:14*), and “fill [her] stomach” (cf. *Ez 3:3*), in accordance with two Bible expressions, and then she gives birth to it with her life and preaching. The second operation is sterile without the first.

“How shall this be, since I have no husband?”, Mary asks and the angel answers, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you” (Lk 1:34-35). When she is faced with tasks beyond her strength, the Church spontaneously asks the same question: “How is this possible?”. How is it possible to proclaim Jesus Christ and his salvation to a world that seems to seek only well-being, in this world? The answer is also the same as then: “*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you*”... “and you shall be my witnesses” (*Acts 1:8*). This is what Jesus told the Apostles after he had risen, using almost the same identical words. Without the Holy Spirit, the Church cannot move forward, the Church does not grow, the Church cannot preach.

What is said about the Church in general also applies to us, to every baptized person. All of us sometimes find ourselves, in life, in situations beyond our strength and ask ourselves: "How can I cope with this situation?". It helps, in such cases, to remember and repeat to ourselves what the angel said to the Virgin: "*With God nothing will be impossible*" (Lk 1:37).

Brothers and sisters, let us too always resume our journey, with this comforting certainty in our hearts: "With God nothing will be impossible". And if we believe this, we will perform miracles. With God nothing will be impossible. Thank you.

APPEAL

I continue to follow the situation in the Middle East with great concern, and I reiterate my appeal to all the parties involved that the conflict does not spread, and that there may be an immediate ceasefire on all fronts, starting with Gaza, where the humanitarian situation is very serious and unsustainable. I pray that the sincere search for peace will extinguish strife, love will overcome hatred and vengeance will be disarmed by forgiveness.

I ask you to join in my prayer also for martyred Ukraine, Myanmar, Sudan: may these war-torn populations soon find the peace for which they yearn.

Let us join our efforts and prayers that ethnic discrimination in regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan be eliminated, and especially discrimination against women.

My thoughts for young people, the sick, the elderly and newlyweds are inspired by the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ which we celebrated yesterday, the same day in which we commemorated the passing of Saint Paul VI. May the bright face of our Lord be a source of hope and comfort to you.

I offer my blessing to all of you!

Special Greetings

I extend a cordial welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from Ireland. I invoke upon you and your families the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Summary of the Holy Father's words

With today's catechesis, we begin our reflections on the Holy Spirit's role in our Redemption. The early Ecumenical Councils that gave us the Nicene Creed affirmed both the divinity of the Holy Spirit and his work in the Incarnation. While all Christians profess this creed, Catholic devotion further expresses its faith in a favorite prayer, the *Angelus*. Mary is understood to be the Bride of the Spirit and so, prefigures the Church, a teaching has maintained from the past to the present. By receiving and sharing the Word of God, every Christian, regardless of life's challenges, can experience, like her, what the Spirit does for the whole Church, for as the angel said to Mary, "Nothing is impossible for God."