



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.35 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, continuing the new cycle of catechesis on the Sacrament of Confirmation, focused on the seal of the Spirit. (Bible passage: from the *Letter of Saint Paul the Apostle to the Galatians* 5: 22-23).

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,

Continuing with the subject of Confirmation, today I wish to cast light on the "intimate connection which this sacrament has with the whole of Christian initiation" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 71).

Before receiving the spiritual anointment that confirms and strengthens the grace of Baptism, confirmands are called to renew the promises that were made one day by parents and godparents. Now they themselves are to profess the faith of the Church, ready to respond “I do” to the questions posed by the bishop; ready, in particular, to believe in the Holy Spirit, “the Lord, the giver of life, Who came upon the Apostles at Pentecost and today is given to you sacramentally in Confirmation” (*Rite of Confirmation*, 26).

As the coming of the Holy Spirit requires hearts gathered in prayer (cf. *Acts* 1: 14), after the silent prayer of the community the bishop, with his hands extended on the confirmands, begs God to infuse in them His holy Spirit Paraclete. This is one Spirit only (cf. *1 Cor* 12: 4), but coming to us it brings with it a wealth of gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, piety and the holy fear of God (cf. *Rite of Confirmation*, 28-29). We have heard the passage from the Bible with these gifts that the Holy Spirit brings. According to the prophet Isaiah (11: 2), these are the seven virtues of the Spirit, poured out onto the Messiah for the fulfilment of His mission. Saint Paul too describes the abundant fruit of the Spirit as “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (*Gal* 5: 22). The one Spirit distributes the multiple gifts that enrich the one Church: He is the author of diversity, but at the same time the Creator of unity. Thus the Spirit gives all these riches that are different but in the same way make harmony, that is the unity of all these spiritual riches that we Christians have.

By the tradition attested to by the Apostles, the Spirit Who completes the grace of Baptism is communicated through the laying on of hands (cf. *Acts* 8: 15-17; 19: 5-6; *Heb* 6: 2). To this biblical gesture, to better express the effusion of the Spirit that pervades those who receive Him, is added anointment with a perfumed oil, called *chrism*, which has remained in use until today, both in the East and in the West (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1289).

The oil – chrism – is a therapeutic and cosmetic substance which, entering into the tissues of the body, mediates wounds and perfumes the limbs; for these qualities it was assumed by biblical and liturgical symbolism to express the action of the Holy Spirit that consecrates and permeates the baptized, embellishing him with charisms. The Sacrament is conferred through the anointment of the forehead with chrism, performed by the bishop with the laying of the hand and through the words: “Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit”. The Holy Spirit is the invisible *gift* bestowed, and the chrism its visible *seal*.

Receiving on the forehead the sign of the cross with the perfumed oil, the confirmand thus receives an indelible spiritual imprint, the “character”, which configures him or her more perfectly to Christ and gives the grace of spreading the “good scent” among men (cf. *2 Cor* 2: 15).

Let us listen again to the invitation of Saint Ambrose to the newly-confirmed. He says: “Recall then that you have received the spiritual seal ... and keep what you have received. God the Father has marked you with His sign; Christ the Lord has confirmed you and has placed His pledge, the Spirit, in your hearts” (*De mysteriis*, 7: 42; *CSEL* 73, 106; cf. *CCC*, 1303). The Spirit is an unmerited gift, to be welcomed with gratitude, making room for its inexhaustible creativity. It is a gift to be conserved with care, to follow with docility, allowing oneself to be moulded like wax by His fiery charity, to “reflect Jesus Christ in today’s world” (*Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete et exsultate*, 23).

Greetings in various languages

French

I cordially greet pilgrims from France and other French-speaking countries. I greet in particular the students of Strasbourg and young people from Nice, Avignon and Seix. Dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to receive with gratitude the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to “reflect Jesus Christ in today’s world”! God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly those from England, Scotland, Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, Australia and the United States of America. I thank the Korean athletes for their performance: it was a demonstration of the will for peace, a representation of the two Koreas together! It was a message of peace for all humanity. Thank you! I also offer a prayerful greeting to the Felician Sisters presently celebrating their General Chapter. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

German

I am pleased to welcome German-speaking pilgrims. The Holy Spirit is the great gift that the Lord gives us. It is important for all the faithful to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, to live fully the grace of Baptism and to be authentic witnesses of Christ in the world. May the Holy Spirit fill us with the abundance of His gifts.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, particularly the groups from Spain and Latin America. I encourage you to welcome and guard with gratitude and docility this beautiful gift that God gives us, which is His Spirit, so that the fire of His love may embody in us the image of Jesus in order to be missionary disciples in today's world. May the Lord bless you. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

With great affection I greet Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, especially the Brazilian groups from Criciúma, Imbuí and Trindade and also the "Colégio Horizonte" of Vila Nova de Gaia. I wish you all an ever greater awareness and faithful listening to the Holy Spirit, the sweet Guest of your souls, so that He may make you strong in faith and courageous in Christian witness. May the blessing of the Lord descend upon you and your families.

Arabic

I extend a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East! Dear brothers and sisters, in Confirmation God the Father has marked us, Christ has confirmed us and has placed the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. Let us conserve this gift with care and allow ourselves to be moulded, like wax, by its fiery charity, to reflect Jesus Christ in today's world. May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I offer my cordial welcome to the Polish pilgrims. May your stay in Rome confirm you in faith, hope and love. I address a special greeting to all those of you who on Saturday will participate in the Youth Meeting in Lednica, to reflect on the Lord Jesus' words: "I am with you every day". I am delighted with the initiative. Dear young people, rest assured that He sees you as a precious treasure for the world. At the same time, you too fix your gaze on the face of the Son of God, wherever you are and whatever you have to do. Only then will you be able to see how you really are. Give Him your mind, your hands, your body, so that, thanks to you, He will be able to reach anyone in need. As you celebrate in Lednica the centenary of the recovery of the independence of your country, as Saint John Paul II used to do, also kiss Polish soil on my behalf. I entrust you to the protection of Mary Queen of Poland and I bless you from my heart.

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking faithful.

I am pleased to welcome the participants in the General Chapter of the Sisters of *San Felice da Cantalice*; the priests and seminarians of the Roman colleges and convents, the deacons of the Pontifical Urban College in Rome; the religious of the *Mater Ecclesiae* Missionary College in Castel Gandolfo, and the *Ordo Viduarum* Group.

I greet the parishes of Oppido Lucano and of Furci; the Roller House Association of Osimo, accompanied by Bishop Claudio Giuliodori; the School of Marshals and Brigadiers of the Carabinieri of Velletri; the "Spirit of the Planet" Association and the *Istituto Castelli di Brescia* Foundation.

A special thought goes to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds. Tomorrow we conclude the Marian month. May the Mother of God be your refuge in happy moments, as well as in the most difficult ones, and be the guide of your families, so that they may become a domestic hearth of prayer, mutual understanding and giving.
