SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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General Audience

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.00 in Saint 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 continued his new cycle of catechesis on "The Spirit and the Bride: the Holy Spirit guides the People of God towards Jesus our hope", focusing on the theme *"All Scripture is inspired by God". Knowing the love of God from the words of God* (Bible reading: *2 Pt* 1:20-21).

After summarizing his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful present.

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

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

Catechesis of the Holy Father: The Spirit and the Bride: the Holy Spirit guides the People of God towards Jesus our hope. 3. *"All Scripture is inspired by God". Knowing the love of God from the words of God*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning, welcome!

Let us continue the catechesis on the Holy Spirit who guides the Church towards Christ our hope. He is the guide. Last time we contemplated the work of the Spirit in creation; today we will see it in *revelation*, in which the *Sacred Scripture* is witness inspired by God and authoritative.

The Second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy contains this statement: "*All Scripture is inspired by God*" (3:16). And another passage in the New Testament says: "*Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God*" (*2 Pt* 1:21). This is the doctrine of the divine inspiration of the Scripture, that which we proclaim as an article of faith in the Creed, when we say that the Holy Spirit "has spoken through the prophets". The divine inspiration of the Bible.

The Holy Spirit, who inspired the Scriptures, is also He who explains and makes them perennially living and active. From *inspired*, He makes them *inspiring*. The Sacred Scriptures "as inspired by God", says Vatican Council II, "and committed once and for all to writing … impart the word of God Himself without change, and make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and Apostles" (21). In this way the Holy Spirit continues, in the Church, the action of the Risen Jesus who, after Easter, "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (*Lk* 24:45).

Indeed, it can happen that in a certain passage of the Scripture, that we have read many times without particular emotion, one day we read it in an atmosphere of faith and prayer, and then that text is unexpectedly illuminated, it speaks to us, it sheds light on a problem we are living, it makes God's will for us clear in a certain situation. To what is this change due, if not to an enlightenment of the Holy Spirit? The words of the Scripture, under the action of the Spirit, become luminous; and in those cases, we touch with our own hands how true is the statement in the Letter to the Hebrews: "*The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword*" (4:12).

Brothers and sisters, the Church is nourished by the spiritual reading of the Sacred Scripture, that is, by reading under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that inspired it. At its centre, like a beacon that illuminates everything, there is the event of the death and resurrection of Christ, which fulfils the plan of salvation, realizes all the figures and the prophecies, unveils all the hidden mysteries and offers the true key to reading the entire Bible. The death and resurrection of Christ is the beacon that illuminates all the Bible, and it also illuminates out life. Revelation describes all of this with the image of the Lamb that breaks the seals of the book "written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals" (cf. 5:1-9), that is, the Scripture of the Old Testament. The Church, Bride of Christ, is the authorized interpreter of the inspired text of the Scripture; the Church is the mediator of its authentic proclamation. Since the Church is gifted with the Holy Spirit – this is why she is the interpreter – she is the "pillar and bulwark of the truth" (*1 Tm* 3:15). Why? Because she is inspired, held steady by the Holy Spirit. And the task of the Church is to help the faithful and those who seek the truth to interpret the biblical texts correctly.

One way of conducting spiritual reading of the word of God is that which is called the *lectio divina*, a word whose meaning we perhaps do not understand. It consists of dedicating a time of the day to the personal and meditative reading of a passage of the Scripture. And this is very important: every day, take the time to listen to, to contemplate, reading a passage from the Scripture. And therefore, I recommend you always to have a pocket edition of the Gospel and keep it in your bag, in your pocket… So, when you are travelling, or have a little free time, take it and read it. This is very important for life. Get a pocket Gospel and during the day read once, twice, when you have the chance. But the quintessential spiritual reading of the Scripture is the community reading in the Liturgy in the Mass. There, we see how an event or a teaching, given by the Old Testament, finds its full expression in the Gospel of Christ. And the homily, that comment by the celebrant, must help to transfer the Word of God from the book to life. But for this, the homily must be brief: an image, a thought and a sentiment. The homily must not go on for more than eight minutes, because after that, with time attention is lost and the people fall asleep, and they are right. A homily must be like that. And I want to say this to priests, who talk a lot, very often, and one does not understand what they are talking about. A brief homily: a thought, a sentiment and a cue for action, for what to do. No more than eight minutes. Because the homily must help transfer the Word of God from the book to life. And among the many words of God that we listen to every day in Mass or in the Liturgy of the Hours, there is always one that is meant specially for us. Something that touches the heart. Welcomed into the heart, it can illuminate our day and inspire our prayer. It is a question of not letting it fall on deaf ears!

Let us conclude with a thought that can help us to fall in love with the Word of God. Like certain pieces of music, the Sacred Scripture too has a base note that accompanies it from the beginning to the end, and this note is the love of God. 'The whole Bible", observes Saint Augustine, "does nothing but tell of God's love".[1] And Saint Gregory the Great defines the Scripture as "a letter from God Almighty to His creature", like a letter from a

bridegroom to his bride, and exhorts us to “learn and know the heart of God in the words of God”.[2] “Through this revelation”, says Vatican Council II again, “the invisible God, out of the abundance of His love, speaks to men as friends and lives among them, so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself” (*Dei Verbum*, 2).

Dear brothers and sisters, keep reading the Bible! But do not forget the pocket Gospel: carry it in your bag, in your pocket, and at some moment during the day, read a passage. And this will make you very close to the Holy Spirit, who is in the Word of God. May the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Scriptures and now breathes from them, help us to grasp this love of God in the concrete situations of life. Thank you.

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[1] *De catechizandis rudibus*, I, 8, 4: *PL* 40, 319.

[2] *Registrum Epistolarum*, V, 46 (ed. Ewald-Hartmann, pp. 345-346).

Greeting in English

I extend a cordial welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially the groups from the United Kingdom, China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, 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!