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General Audience

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.00 in the Paul VI Hall, 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 "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*". *The Holy Spirit in the Baptism of Jesus* (Bible reading: Acts 10:34, 37-38).

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. 6. "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*". *The Holy Spirit in the Baptism of Jesus*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today we will reflect on the Holy Spirit who comes upon Jesus in the baptism in the Jordan, and spreads from Him into His body, which is the Church. In the Gospel of Mark, the scene of Jesus' baptism is described thus: "In those days Jesus came up from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased'" (Mk 1:9-11). This

is the Gospel of Mark.

The entire Trinity met at that moment, on the banks of the Jordan! There is the Father, who is present with His voice; there is the Holy Spirit, who descends upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and there is He Whom the Father proclaims to be His beloved Son, Jesus. It is a very important moment of Revelation, it is an important moment of salvation history. It will be good for us to reread this passage of the Gospel.

What happened that was so important in the baptism of Jesus that led all the Evangelists to recount it? We find the answer in the words Jesus utters, shortly afterwards, in the synagogue of Nazareth, clearly referring to the event in the Jordan: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me*" (Lk 4:18).

In the Jordan, God the Father "anointed with the Holy Spirit"; that is, He consecrated Jesus as King, Prophet and Priest. Indeed, in the Old Testament, kings, prophets and priests were anointed with perfumed oil. In the case of Christ, instead of physical oil, there is the spiritual oil that is the Holy Spirit; instead of the symbol there is the reality: there is the very Spirit who descends upon Jesus.

Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit ever since the first moment of His incarnation. However, this was a "personal grace", incommunicable; now, instead, with this anointment, He receives the fullness of the gift of the Spirit, but for His mission which, as the head, He will communicate to His body, which is the Church, and to every one of us. This is why the Church is the new "regal people, prophetic people, and priestly people". The Hebrew term "Messiah" and the corresponding Greek "Christ" - *Christós*, both referring to Jesus, mean "anointed". He was anointed with the oil of joy, anointed with the Holy Spirit. Our very name of "Christians" was explained by the Fathers in the literal sense: "Christian" means "anointed in imitation of Christ".[1] Christians, anointed in imitation of Christ.

There is a Psalm in the Bible that speaks of a perfumed oil, poured on the head of the high priest Aaron, and which descends to the hem of his robe (cf. *Ps* 133:2). This poetic image of the descending oil, used to describe the happiness of living together as brothers, has become a spiritual reality and a mystical reality in Christ and in the Church. Christ is the head, our High Priest, the Holy Spirit is the perfumed oil, and the Church is the body of Christ in which it spreads.

We have seen why the Holy Spirit, in the Bible, is symbolized by wind and, indeed, takes its very name, *Ruah*, from it. It is also worth asking ourselves why it is symbolized by oil, and what practical lesson we can draw from this symbol. In the Mass of Holy Thursday, consecrating the oil known as "Chrism", the bishop, referring to those who will receive the anointing in Baptism and Confirmation, says: "May those formed into a temple of your majesty by the holiness infused through this anointing and by the cleansing of the stain of their first birth be made fragrant with the innocence of a life pleasing to you". It is a use that dates back to Saint Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians: "For we are the aroma of Christ to God" (2 *Cor* 2:15). Anointment perfumes us, and a person who lives his anointment with joy makes the Church fragrant, makes the community fragrant, makes the family fragrant with this spiritual scent.

We know that, unfortunately, sometimes Christians do not spread the fragrance of Christ, but the bad odour of their own sin. And let us never forget: sin distances us from Jesus, sin makes us become bad oil. And the devil – let us not forget this – the devil usually enters via the pocket. Beware, beware. However, this must not distract us from the commitment of realizing, as far as we are able and each in their own environment, this sublime vocation of being the good fragrance of Christ in the world. The fragrance of Christ emanates from the "fruits of the Spirit", which are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (*Gal* 5:22). Paul said this, and how good it is to find a person who has these virtues: love, a loving person, a joyful person, a person who makes peace, a magnanimous person, not mean, magnanimous, a benevolent person who welcomes everyone, a good person, a faithful person, a meek person, who is not proud, but meek... And someone will feel some of the fragrance of the Spirit of Christ around us, when we find these people. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to make us more aware that we are anointed, anointed by Him. Thank you.

[1] Cf. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catechesis*, III,1.

Greeting in English

I extend a warm welcome to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience. Upon you and your families I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you all!

Appeals of the Holy Father

Today, memorial of Saint Pius X, the day of the catechist is celebrated in many parts of the world. Let us think of our catechists who do so much work and, in some parts of the world, are the first to bring the faith forward. Let us pray today for catechists, that the Lord may make them courageous and that they may continue.

And please, let us not forget tormented Ukraine, which suffers so much. Let us not forget Myanmar, South Sudan, North Kivu and the many countries who are at war. Let us pray for peace. And let us not forget Palestine and Israel: may there be peace there.
