



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday 13 September 2000

Christians are enlivened by the Holy Spirit

1. In the Upper Room, on the last evening of his earthly life, Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit five times (cf. *Jn* 14: 16-17; 14: 26; 15: 26-27; 16: 7-11; 16: 12-15). In the same place, the Risen One presents himself to the Apostles on Easter evening and pours out the promised Spirit with the symbolic act of breathing on them and with the words: "Receive the Holy Spirit!" (*Jn* 20: 22). Fifty days later, also in the Upper Room, the Holy Spirit bursts in with his power, transforming the hearts and lives of the first Gospel witnesses.

Since then, the deepest dynamics of the Church's history have been imbued with the presence and action of the Spirit, "given not by measure" to those who believe in Christ (cf. *Jn* 3: 34). The encounter with Christ involves the gift of the Holy Spirit who, in the words of Basil, the great Father of the Church, "is poured out on everyone without being diminished in any way, is present to each one of those who is capable of receiving it as if it were for him alone, and on all, he pours sufficient and complete grace (*De Spiritu Sancto* IX, 22).

2. The Apostle Paul, in the passage of the Letter to the Galatians which we have just heard (cf. 5: 16-18, 22-25), describes "the fruit of the Spirit" (5: 22) listing a broad range of virtues which flow into the life of the faithful. The Holy Spirit is at the root of the experience of faith. In fact, it is precisely in Baptism that through the Spirit that we become children of God: "because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (*Gal* 4: 6). At the very source of Christian life, when we are born as new creatures, is the breath of the Spirit who makes us children in the Son and enables us to "walk" on the paths of justice and salvation (cf. *Gal* 5: 16).

3. All the events of Christian life must therefore take place under the influence of the Spirit. When he presents Christ's words to us, the light of truth shines within us, as Jesus promised: "the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (*Jn* 14: 26; cf. 16: 12-15). The Spirit is beside us at the moment of trial, becoming our defender and our support: "When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (*Mt* 10: 19-20). The Spirit is at the root of Christian freedom, which is removal from the yoke of sin. The Apostle Paul clearly says so: "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" (*Rom* 8: 2). Precisely because moral life is irradiated by the Spirit, as St Paul reminds us, it produces fruits of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (*Gal* 5: 22).

4. The Spirit enlivens the entire community of believers in Christ. Once again, the Apostle celebrates as a work of the Holy Spirit the multiplicity and riches, as well as the unity of the Church, through the image of the body. On the one hand Paul lists the variety of charisms or special gifts which are offered to the Church's members (cf. 1 *Cor* 12: 1-10); on the other, he asserts that "all these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 *Cor* 12: 11). Indeed, "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 *Cor* 12: 13).

Lastly, it is to the Spirit that we are indebted for the attainment of our destiny of glory. In this regard, St Paul uses the images of the "seal" and the "guarantee": "you ... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" (*Eph* 1: 13-14; cf. 2 *Cor* 1: 22; 5: 5). To sum up, the whole of the Christian's life, from its origins to its final goal, is under the banner of the Holy Spirit and is his work.

5. I am pleased to recall during this Jubilee Year what I said in the Encyclical dedicated to the Holy Spirit: "The Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 thus contains a message of liberation by the power of the Spirit, who alone can help individuals and communities to free themselves from the old and new determinisms, by guiding them with the 'law of the Spirit, which gives life in Christ Jesus', and thereby discovering and accomplishing the full measure of man's true freedom. For, as St Paul writes, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (*Dominum et vivificantem*, n. 60).

Let us therefore abandon ourselves to the liberating action of the Spirit, making our own the amazement of Symeon the New Theologian, who addresses the third divine Person in these words: "I see the beauty of your grace, I contemplate its radiance, I reflect its light; I am caught up in its ineffable splendour; I am taken outside myself as I think of myself; I see how I was and what I have become. O wonder! I am vigilant, I am full of respect for myself, of reverence and of fear, as I would be were I before you; I do not know what to do, I am seized by fear, I do not know where to sit, where to go, where to put these members which are yours; in what deeds, in what works shall I

use them, these amazing divine marvels!" (*Hymns*, II, verses 19-27: cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, n. 20).

At the end of his catechesis, the Holy Father appealed for the life of Derek Rocco Barnabei, imprisoned in Virginia, USA.

In the spirit of clemency that is characteristic of the Jubilee Year, I once again add my voice to that of all those who are asking that young Derek Rocco Barnabei's life be spared.

I also hope, more generally, that we will reach the point of giving up recourse to capital punishment, since today the State has other means available to suppress crime effectively, without definitively depriving the offender of the possibility of redeeming himself.

* * *

I extend a special greeting to the Jubilee pilgrimages from the Dioceses of Cloyne and Cork and Ross, led by Bishop John Magee; Derry, led by Bishop Séamus Hegarty and Emeritus Bishop Edward Daly; Aberdeen, led by Bishop Mario Conti; the Archdiocese of Dubuque, led by Archbishop Jerome Hanus; and the Diocese of Alexandria, led by Bishop Samuel Jacobs. Upon all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially those from England, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, Japan, New Zealand and the United States of America, I invoke the abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit.

© Copyright 2000 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana