



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHL
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
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N. 240529d

Wednesday 29.05.2024

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 began a 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 God was hovering over the waters* (Bible reading: *Gen 1:1-2*).

After summarizing his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful present. He then made an appeal for prayer for the victims of the landslide in Papua New Guinea.

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. 1. *The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today, with this catechesis we begin a cycle of reflections with the theme 'The Holy Spirit and the Bride' – the bride is the Church – "The Holy Spirit guides God's people towards Jesus our hope". We will make this journey through the three great stages of salvation history: the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the time of the Church. Always keeping our gaze fixed on Jesus, Who is our hope.

In these first catecheses on the Spirit in the Old Testament, we will not do 'biblical archaeology'. Instead, we will discover that what is given as a promise in the Old Testament has been fully realised in Christ. It will be like

following the path of the sun from dawn to noon.

Let us begin with the first two verses of the entire Bible. The first two verses of the Bible read: 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And *the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters*' (*Gen 1:1-2*). The Spirit of God appears to us here as the mysterious power that moves the world from its initial formless, deserted, and gloomy state to its ordered and harmonious state. Because the Spirit makes harmony, harmony in life, harmony in the world. In other words, it is He who makes the world pass from chaos to the cosmos, that is, from confusion to something beautiful and ordered. This, in fact, is the meaning of the Greek word *kosmos*, as well as the Latin word *mundus*, that is, something beautiful, something ordered, clean, harmonious, because the Spirit is harmony.

This still vague hint of the Holy Spirit's action in creation becomes more precise in the following revelation. In a psalm we read: 'By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host' (*Psalms 33:6*); and again: 'You send forth Your spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the earth' (*Psalms 104:30*).

This line of development becomes very clear in the New Testament, which describes the intervention of the Holy Spirit in the new creation, using precisely the images that one reads about in connection with the origin of the world: the dove that hovers over the waters of the Jordan at Jesus' baptism (cf. *Mt 3:16*); Jesus who, in the Upper Room, breathes on the disciples and says: 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (*Jn 20:22*), just as in the beginning God breathed His breath on Adam (cf. *Gen 2:7*).

The Apostle Paul introduces a new element into this relationship between *the Holy Spirit and creation*. He speaks of a universe that 'groans and suffers as in labour pains' (cf. *Rom 8:22*). It suffers because of man who has subjected it to the 'bondage of corruption' (cf. vv. 20-21). It is a reality that concerns us closely and concerns us dramatically. The Apostle sees the cause of the suffering of creation in the corruption and sin of humanity that has dragged it into its alienation from God. This remains as true today as it was then. We see the havoc that has been done, and that continues to be wrought upon creation by humanity, especially that part of it that has greater capacity to exploit its resources.

St Francis of Assisi shows us a way out, a beautiful way, a way out to return to the harmony of the Spirit: the way of contemplation and praise. He wanted a canticle of praise to the Creator to be raised from the creatures. We recall, 'Laudato sí, mi Signore...' the canticle of Francis of Assisi.

One of the psalms (18:2 [19:1]) says, '*The heavens declare the glory of God*', but men and women are needed to give voice to this mute cry of theirs. And in the '*Sanctus*' of the Mass we repeat each time: 'Heaven and earth are full of your glory'. They are, so to speak, 'pregnant' with it, but they need the hands of a good midwife to give birth to this praise of theirs. Our vocation in the world, Paul again reminds us, is to be '*praise of His glory*' (*Eph 1:12*). It is to put the joy of contemplating ahead of the joy of possessing. And no one has rejoiced in creatures more than Francis of Assisi, who did not want to possess any of them.

Brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit, Who in the beginning transformed chaos into cosmos, is at work to bring about this transformation in every person. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God promises: 'I will give you a new heart, and a new Spirit I will put within you... I will put my Spirit within you' (*Ez 36:26-27*). For our heart resembles that deserted, dark abyss of the first verses of Genesis. Opposed feelings and desires stir within it: those of the flesh and those of the spirit. We are all, in a sense, that 'kingdom divided against itself' that Jesus talks about in the Gospel (cf. *Mk 3:24*). Within ourselves we can say that there is an external chaos – social chaos, political chaos. We think about wars, we think about so many boys and girls who don't have enough to eat, about so many social injustices. This is the external chaos. But there is also an internal chaos: internal to each of us. The former cannot be healed unless we begin to heal the latter! Brothers and sisters, let us do a good job of making our internal confusion a clarity of the Holy Spirit. It is the power of God that does this, and we open our hearts so that He can do it.

May this reflection arouse in us the desire to experience the Creator Spirit. For more than a millennium, the Church has put on our lips the cry to ask: '*Veni creator Spiritus!* 'Come, O Creator Spirit! Visit our minds. Fill with heavenly grace the hearts you have created.' Let us ask the Holy Spirit to come to us and make us new persons, with the newness of the Spirit. Thank you.

Greeting in English

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially the groups from England, the Netherlands, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Korea, Thailand, 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!

Appeal of the Holy Father

I want to offer assurance of my prayers for the victims of the great landslide that swept through some villages in Papua New Guinea. May the Lord comfort the family members, those who have lost their homes, and the Papuan people, whom God willing I will meet next September.
