
Pope at audience: “Call upon the Holy Spirit, every day.” Appeal for Myanmar and Paraguay

“The first gift of every Christian existence is the Holy Spirit. It is not one of many gifts, but rather the fundamental *Gift*. The Spirit is the gift that Jesus had promised to send us”, the Pope said in the second general audience devoted to Prayer and the Trinity. “Without the Spirit there is no relationship with Christ and with the Father”, Francis said speaking from the Private Library of the Apostolic Palace whence the catechesis was broadcast via live streaming: “because the Spirit opens our heart to God’s presence and draws it into that ‘vortex’ of love that is the very heart of God.” “All the spiritual work within us towards God is performed by the Holy Spirit”, “he is our Trinitarian memory, the Spirit brings Jesus to the present in our consciousness.”

“If Christ were only far away in time, we would be alone and lost in the world”,

Francis continued: “it is the Spirit that brings him today, now, in this moment, in our heart. But in the Spirit everything is brought to life: the possibility of encountering Christ is open to Christians of every time and place. The possibility of encountering Christ, not only as a historical figure, is open.” “He attracts Christ to our hearts, it is the Spirit who makes us encounter Jesus”, the Pope added in unprepared remarks: “He is not distant, the Spirit is with us: Jesus still teaches his disciples by transforming their hearts, as he did with Peter, with Paul, with Mary Magdalene, with all the apostles.” “This is the experience of so many people who pray”, the Pope said: “Men and women whom the Holy Spirit has formed according to the ‘measure’ of Christ, in mercy, in service, in prayer, in catechesis... It is a grace to be able to meet people like this: you realise that a different life pulses in them, the way they look ‘beyond’.” *“We can think not only of monks and hermits; they are also found among ordinary people, people who have woven a long history of dialogue with God, sometimes of inner struggle, that purifies their faith. These humble witnesses”, Francis said, “have sought God in the Gospel, in the Eucharist received and adored, in the face of a brother or sister in difficulty, and they safeguard his presence like a secret flame.”* **“The first task of Christians is precisely to keep alive this flame** that Jesus brought to the earth, and what is this flame? It is love, the Love of God, the Holy Spirit”, the Holy Father’s guidance: “Without the fire of the Spirit, His prophecies are extinguished, sorrow supplants joy, routine substitutes love, and service turns into slavery”, Francis cautioned, mentioning the image of the lighted lamp next to the Tabernacle, where the Eucharist is reserved: “Even when the church empties and evening falls, even when the church is closed, that lamp remains lit, and continues to burn; no one sees it, yet it burns before the Lord. This is how the Spirit is in our heart, always present like that lamp.” *“Very often it happens that we do not pray, we don’t feel like praying, or many times we pray like parrots, with the mouth, but our heart is not in it”,* The Pope continued in unscripted remarks: “This is the moment to say to the Spirit: ‘Come, come Holy Spirit, warm my heart. Come and teach me to pray, teach me to look to the Father, to look to the Son. Teach me the path of faith. Teach me how to love and, above all, teach me to have an attitude of hope.”

“It means calling on the Spirit continually, so he may be present in our lives”,

the Pope’s unscripted invitation: **“It is therefore the Spirit who writes the history of the Church and of the world”**, Francis assured: “We are open books, willing to receive his handwriting. And in each of us the Spirit composes original works, because there is never one Christian who is completely identical to another. All are equal in dignity, but also unique in the beauty that the Spirit has willed to be released in each of those whom God’s mercy has made his children.” “Let us not forget” - the final invitation of the catechesis - “the Spirit is present, he is present in us. Let us listen

to the Spirit, let us call to the Spirit - he is the gift, the present that God has given us - and say to him: 'Holy Spirit, I do not know your face - we do not know it - but I know that you are the strength, that you are the light, that you are able to make me go forth, and to teach me how to pray. Come, Holy Spirit'. This is a beautiful prayer." In the closing greetings the Pope made two important appeals for Myanmar and Paraguay. "Once again, and with great sorrow, I feel it is urgent to mention the dramatic situation in Myanmar, where many people, especially the young, are losing their lives to offer hope to their country", Francis said. *"I too kneel in the streets of Myanmar – the Pope said sharing the gesture of the nun reported by the media worldwide – and say: End the violence! I too reach out my arms and say: may dialogue prevail!"* The Pope made an appeal for Paraguay in Spanish: "I ask the Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, that a path of sincere dialogue may be found to find adequate solutions to the present difficulties, and thus build together the longed-for peace. Let us remember that violence is always self-destructive. Nothing is gained through it, but much is lost, sometimes everything."

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