



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday 31 May 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. The Christian Pentecost, a celebration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, presents various aspects in the writings of the New Testament. We will start with the one we have just heard described in the passage from the *Acts of the Apostles*. It is the most obvious one in everyone's mind, in the history of art and in the liturgy itself.

In his second work, Luke situates the gift of the Spirit within a theophany, that is, a solemn divine revelation, whose symbols refer to Israel's experience at Sinai (cf. *Ex 19*). The roar, the driving wind and the lightening-like fire exalt the divine transcendence. In reality, it is the Father who gives the Spirit through the intervention of the glorified Christ. Peter says so in his address: Jesus, "being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, has poured out this which you see and hear" (*Acts 2: 33*). At Pentecost, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, the Holy Spirit is "manifested, given and communicated as a divine Person.... On that day, the Holy Trinity is fully revealed" ([CCC, nn. 731-732](#)).

2. The whole Trinity, in fact, is involved in the inbreaking of the Spirit, who is poured out upon the first community and upon the Church in every age as the seal of the New Covenant foretold by the prophets (cf. *Jer 31: 31-34; Ez 36: 24-27*), to support its witness and as a source of unity in plurality. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles proclaim the Risen One, and all believers, in the diversity of their languages and thus of their cultures and historical events, profess the same faith in the Lord, "telling ... the mighty works of God" (*Acts 2: 11*).

It is significant to note that a Jewish commentary on Exodus, recalling chapter 10 of Genesis, which sketches a map of the 70 nations which were then thought to comprise humanity as a whole, leads them back to Sinai to hear the word of God: "At Sinai the Lord's voice was divided into 70 languages, so that all the nations could understand" (*Exodus Rabba*' 5, 9). So too in the *Lucan Pentecost*, the Word of God is addressed to humanity through the Apostles, in order to proclaim "the mighty works of God" (*Acts* 2: 11) to all peoples even with their differences.

3. In the New Testament, however, there is another account that we could call the *Johannine Pentecost*. In the fourth Gospel, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit actually takes place on the very evening of Easter and is closely connected to the Resurrection. In John we read: "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you!". When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you'. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (*Jn* 20: 19-23).

The glory of the Trinity also shines out in this Johannine account: the glory of the *risen Christ* who appears in his glorious body, of the *Father*, who is the source of the apostolic mission, and of the *Spirit* poured out as the gift of peace. This fulfils the promise which Christ had made between these same walls in his farewell discourse to the disciples: "But the Counselor, 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). The Spirit's presence in the Church is intended for the forgiveness of sins, for remembering and carrying out the Gospel in life, for the ever deeper achievement of unity in love.

The symbolic act of breathing is meant to recall the action of the Creator who, after forming man's body from the dust of the ground, "breathed into his nostrils" to give him "the breath of life" (*Gn* 2: 7). The risen Christ communicates another breath of life, "the Holy Spirit". Redemption is a new creation, a divine work with which the Church is called to collaborate through the ministry of reconciliation.

4. The Apostle Paul does not offer us a direct account of the outpouring of the Spirit but describes its fruits with such intensity that one could speak of a *Pauline Pentecost*, which is also marked by the Trinity. According to two parallel passages in the Letters to the Galatians and to the Romans, in fact, the Spirit is the gift of the Father, who makes us his adoptive children, giving us a share in the very life of the divine family. Paul therefore says: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!", it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then

heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (*Rom* 8: 15-17; cf. *Gal* 4: 6-7).

With the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we can address God with the familiar name *abba*, the name Jesus himself used with his heavenly Father (cf. *Mk* 14: 36). Like him, we must walk according to the Spirit in profound inner freedom: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (*Gal* 5: 22).

Let us end our contemplation of the Trinity at Pentecost with an invocation from the liturgy of the East: "Come, peoples, let us adore the Divinity in three Persons: the Father in the Son with the Holy Spirit. For the Father begets from eternity a coeternal Son who lives and reigns with him, and the Holy Spirit is in the Father, glorified with the Son, one power, one substance, one divinity.... Holy Trinity, glory to you!" (*Vespers of Pentecost*).

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I warmly welcome the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially those from England, Finland, South Africa, Singapore, the Philippines, Korea, Japan and the United States of America. Upon all of you, I invoke the abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Greeting to the pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Lviv

I extend a particular greeting to the pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Lviv present at today's audience. I greet Archbishop Marian Jaworski, Metropolitan of Lviv, Auxiliary Bishop Stanislaw Padewski, the priests, religious and all the faithful.

1. You come to Rome, to the tombs of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul in the Year of the Great Jubilee, to express through them your gratitude to God above all for the gift of faith received in holy Baptism and to ask for it to be strengthened. You are well aware of the value of this gift. For decades you paid for your fidelity to God with suffering and various forms of humiliation; you were discriminated against and endured painful persecutions.

I am deeply moved in thinking of the great numbers of lay people and clergy who had the courage and strength to persevere to the very end on the side of Christ and his Church, despite imprisonment, deportation to concentration camps and forced labour. How many of them paid with their lives for this fidelity to God, to the Catholic Church and to the Apostolic See. Today the Church thanks you and your brethren of the Eastern rite.

I ask you to remember deeply the witness of these martyrs and to pass it on to the generations to come. For they are signs of that love which never shrinks from any danger or sacrifice. They are thus part of the Church's great heritage of faith in your lands. May their witness be an example and an encouragement to you on the path of the new millennium.

2. Dear brothers and sisters, your presence in the Eternal City is linked with the tradition started by the Servant of God Archbishop Józef Bilczewski, who often came on pilgrimage to Rome with his faithful to emphasize Lviv's deep bond with the Apostolic See. Let us thank almighty God that this beautiful custom has been restored, and today's meeting is proof of it. I would like to tell you with real emotion that I am delighted by your presence in St Peter's Square and am grateful to all who have prepared this pilgrimage. For we are witnesses to the great works of God and to the great signs of divine Providence. Praised be the Most Holy Trinity for this!

3. My thoughts also turn to Our Lady of Grace. I entrust your entire Archdiocese to her. May she always be present in your life. May she watch over you and implore from her Son the graces you need. May she open hearts to hearing God's truth and fulfilling his will.

Once again, I cordially greet all those who have come here and hope that the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 will strengthen your faith, confirm your hope and fill you with a love that is always ready to serve others.

May God bless you and all your dear brothers and sisters of the beloved Archdiocese of Lviv.
Praised be Jesus Christ!

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