



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

*Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 26 June 2013*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today I would like to mention briefly another image that helps us describe the mystery of the Church: the temple (cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 6).

What does the word “temple” make us think of? It makes us think of a building, of a construction. More especially the minds of many turn to the history of the People of Israel recounted in the Old Testament. Solomon’s great Temple in Jerusalem was the place for the encounter with God in prayer. Inside the Temple was the Ark of the Covenant, a sign of God’s presence among the people; and the Ark contained the Tables of the Law, the manna and Aaron’s rod. This was a reminder that God had always been in the history of his People, that he had accompanied it on its journey and had guided its steps. The Temple is a memorial of this history. When we go to the Temple we too must remember this history, each one of us our own history, how Jesus met me, how Jesus walked beside me, how Jesus loves and blesses me.

It is this that was prefigured in the ancient Temple and brought about in the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit: the Church is “God’s house”, the place of his presence, where we can find and encounter the Lord; the Church is the Temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells. It is he who gives life to her, who guides and sustains her. Let us ask ourselves: where can we meet God? Where can we enter into communion with him through Christ? Where can we find the light of the Holy Spirit to

light up our life? The answer is: in the People of God, among us who are the Church. It is here that we shall encounter Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Father.

The ancient Temple was built by human hands. There was a wish “to give God a house”, to have a visible sign of his presence among the people. With the Incarnation of the Son of God, Nathan’s prophecy to King David was fulfilled (cf. 2 Sam 7:1-29): it is not the king, it is not we who “give God a house”; rather it is God himself who “builds his house” in order to come and dwell among us, as St John wrote in his Gospel (cf. 1:14). Christ is the living Temple of the Father, and Christ himself builds his “spiritual house”: the Church, not made of material stones but rather of “living stones”, which we are. The Apostle Paul said to the Christians of Ephesus: you are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built... for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:20-22). This is a beautiful thing! We are the living stones of God’s building, profoundly united to Christ who is the keystone and also the one that sustains us. What does this mean? It means that we are the temple, we are the living Church, the living temple, and with us when we are together is also the Holy Spirit, who helps us to grow as Church. We are not alone, for we are the People of God: this is the Church!

And it is the Holy Spirit with his gifts who designs the variety. This is important: what does the Holy Spirit do among us? He designs the variety which is a wealth in the Church and unites us, each and every one, to constitute a spiritual temple in which we do not offer material sacrifices but ourselves, our life (cf. 1 Pt 2:4-5). The Church is not a fabric woven of things and interests; she is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Temple in which God works, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Temple in which God works, the Temple in which, with the gift of Baptism, each one of us is a living stone. This tells us that no one in the Church is useless, and if from time to time someone says to someone else: “go home, you are no good”, this is not true. For no one is no good in the Church, we are all necessary for building this Temple! No one is secondary. No one is the most important person in the Church, we are all equal in God’s eyes. Some of you might say “Listen, Mr Pope, you are not our equal”. Yes, I am like each one of you, we are all equal, we are brothers and sisters! No one is anonymous: we all both constitute and build the Church. This also invites us to reflect on the fact that if the brick of our Christian life goes missing, the beauty of the Church loses something. Some people say “I have nothing to do with the Church”; but in this way the brick of a life in this beautiful Temple is left out. No one can go away, we must all bring the Church our life, our heart, our love, our thought and our work: all of us together.

I would now like us to ask ourselves: how do we live our being Church? Are we living stones or are we, as it were, stones that are weary, bored or indifferent? Have you ever noticed how grim it is to see a tired, bored and indifferent Christian? A Christian like that is all wrong, the Christian must be alive, rejoicing in being Christian; he or she must live this beauty of belonging to the People of God which is the Church. Do we open ourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit, to be an active part of our communities or do we withdraw into ourselves, saying; “I have so much to do, it isn’t my job!”?

The Lord gives all of us his grace, his strength, so that we may be profoundly united to Christ, who is the cornerstone, the pillar and the foundation of our life and of the whole life of the Church. Let us pray that enlivened by his Spirit we may always be living stones of his Church.

Greetings:

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, including those from England, Scotland, Wales, South Africa, Indonesia, Canada and the United States. May your stay in the Eternal City confirm you in love for our Lord and his Church. God bless you all!

I am pleased to greet Cardinal Salvatore De Giorgi and all who are close to him on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his Ordination to the priesthood and the 40th anniversary of his episcopal Ordination. Only think! What a splendid service to the Church: 60 years of priesthood and 40 of the episcopate! It is a lovely service which he has carried out with a father's heart, with the kindness of a father, and with this father's heart he has done so much good to the Church. This morning we celebrated Mass and there was a small group of priests who had been ordained by him. The group was "small". It consisted of more than 80! Imagine how many priests he must have ordained: let us thank him for all that he has done for the Church. I greet the Daughters of the Church and the Suore delle Poverelle [Sisters of Poor Women], who are celebrating their General Chapters.

I would also like as usual to address my cordial greeting to the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newlyweds*.

I hope that this meeting will be for each and every one an encouragement to disseminate enthusiastically the newness of the eternal saving message brought by Christ.