



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

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1. Christ's whole life was lived *in the Holy Spirit*. St Basil states that the Spirit was his "inseparable companion in everything" (*De Spir. S.*, 16) and offers us this marvellous summary of Christ's history: "Christ's coming: the Holy Spirit precedes; the Incarnation: the Holy Spirit is present; miraculous works, graces and healings: through the Holy Spirit; demons are expelled, the devil is chained: through the Holy Spirit; forgiveness of sins, union with God: through the Holy Spirit; resurrection of the dead: by the power of Holy Spirit" (*ibid.*, 19).

After meditating on Jesus' baptism and his mission carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit, we now wish to reflect on the revelation of the Spirit in Jesus' supreme "hour", the hour of his death and resurrection.

2. The Holy Spirit's presence at the moment of Jesus' death is already presupposed by the simple fact that on the cross it is the Son of God who dies in his human nature. If "*unus de Trinitate passus est*" (DS 401), that is, if "one Person of the Trinity suffered", the whole Trinity is present in his passion; thus the Father and the Holy Spirit are present as well.

However, we have to ask ourselves: what was the Holy Spirit's precise role in Jesus' supreme hour? This question can only be answered if the mystery of redemption is understood as a *mystery of love*.

Sin, which is the creature's rebellion against the Creator, had interrupted the dialogue of love between God and his children.

In the Incarnation of the Only-begotten Son, God expresses his faithful and passionate love for

sinful humanity, to the point of making himself vulnerable in Jesus. Sin, for its part, reveals on Golgotha its nature as an “attack on God”, so that whenever human beings fall back into serious sin, as the Letter to the Hebrews says, “they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt” (*Heb 6:6*).

In handing his Son over for our sins, God reveals to us that his loving plan precedes our every merit and abundantly surpasses all our infidelities. “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (1 *Jn 4:10*).

3. The passion and death of Jesus is an ineffable mystery of love in which the three divine Persons are involved. The Father takes the free and absolute initiative: it is he who loves first and, in delivering the Son into our murderous hands, exposes his dearest possession. As St Paul says, he “did not spare his own Son”, that is, he did not keep him for himself as a jealously held treasure, but “gave him up for us all” (*Rom 8:32*).

The Son fully shares the Father’s love and his plan of salvation: “He gave himself for our sins ... according to the will of our God and Father” (*Gal 1:4*).

And the Holy Spirit? As in the intimacy of Trinitarian life, so too in this exchange of love which takes place between the Father and the Son in the mystery of Golgotha, the Holy Spirit is the Person-Love in whom the love of the Father and the Son converge.

The Letter to the Hebrews develops the image of sacrifice, stating that Jesus offered himself “through the eternal Spirit” (*Heb 9:14*). In the Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, I showed that in this passage “eternal Spirit” means precisely the Holy Spirit: as fire consumed the sacrificial victims of the old ritual sacrifices, so “the Holy Spirit acted in a special way in this absolute self-giving of the Son of Man in order to transform this suffering into redemptive love” (n. 40). “The Holy Spirit as Love and Gift *comes down, in a certain sense, into the very heart of the sacrifice* which is offered on the Cross. Referring here to the biblical tradition we can say: *he consumes this sacrifice with the fire of the love* which unites the Son with the Father in Trinitarian communion. And since the sacrifice of the Cross is an act proper to Christ, also in this sacrifice he ‘receives’ the Holy Spirit” (ibid., n. 41).

In the Roman liturgy, the priest rightly prays before Communion in these significant words: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, by the will of the Father *and the work of the Holy Spirit* your death brought life to the world”.

4. Jesus’ history does not end in death but leads to the glorious life of Easter. “By his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord” was “designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness” (cf. *Rom 1:4*).

The resurrection is the fulfilment of the Incarnation and it too takes place, like the Son's birth in the world, "by the work of the Holy Spirit". St Paul says at Antioch in Pisidia: "We bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children *by raising Jesus*; as is also written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'" (*Acts* 13:32).

The gift of the Holy Spirit, which the Son received in its fullness on Easter morning, is poured out in abundance by him on the Church. Jesus says to his disciples gathered in the Upper Room: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (*Jn* 20:22), and he gives this Spirit to them "as it were through the wounds of his crucifixion: 'He showed them his hands and his side'" (*Dominum et Vivificantem*, n. 24). Jesus' saving mission is summed up and fulfilled in communicating the Spirit to human beings, to lead them back to the Father.

5. If the Holy Spirit's "masterpiece" is the paschal mystery of the Lord Jesus, a mystery of suffering and glory, through the gift of the Spirit Christ's disciples can also suffer and make the cross the path to light: "*per crucem ad lucem*". The Spirit of the Son gives us the grace to have the same sentiments as Christ and to love as he loved, to the point of offering our life for the brethren: "He laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 *Jn* 3:16).

By communicating his Spirit to us, Christ enters our life, so that each of us can say, like Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (*Gal* 2:20). Our whole life thus becomes a continual Passover, a constant passing from death to life, until the final Passover, when we too will pass with Jesus and like Jesus "from this world to the Father" (*Jn* 13:1). In fact, St Irenaeus of Lyons says, "those who have received and bear the Spirit of God are led to the Word, that is, to the Son, and the Son welcomes them and presents them to the Father, and the Father gives them incorruptibility" (*Demonst. Apost.*, 7).

To the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors the Holy Father said:

I extend a special greeting to the Filipino community present at this Audience, who are celebrating the Hundred Years of the Declaration of Independence. May almighty God abundantly bless your country! I warmly welcome the Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union. I greet the priests and laity from the Diocese of Thamarasserry, and the group of Lutheran young people from Finland. Upon all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially those from Ireland, Finland, Singapore, India, the Philippines and the United States of America, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord.

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