



The Holy See

POPE JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

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Mary prays for outpouring of the Spirit

1. Retracing the course of the Virgin Mary's life, the Second Vatican Council recalls her presence in the community waiting for Pentecost. "But since it had pleased God not to manifest solemnly the mystery of the salvation of the human race before he would pour forth the Spirit promised by Christ, we see the Apostles before the day of Pentecost 'persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren' (Acts 1:14), and we also see Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation" (*Lumen gentium*, n.59).

The first community is the prelude to the birth of the Church; the Blessed Virgin's presence helps to sketch her definitive features, a fruit of the gift of Pentecost.

2. In the atmosphere of expectation that prevailed in the Upper Room after the Ascension, what was Mary's position in relation to the descent of the Holy Spirit?

The Council expressly underscores her prayerful presence while waiting for the outpouring of the Paraclete: she prays, "imploring the gift of the Spirit". This observation is particularly significant since at the Annunciation the Holy Spirit had descended upon her, "overshadowing" her and bringing about the Incarnation of the Word.

Having already had a unique experience of the effectiveness of such a gift, the Blessed Virgin was in a condition to appreciate it more than anyone; indeed, she owed her motherhood to the mysterious intervention of the Spirit, who had made her the way by which the Saviour came into

the world.

Unlike those in the Upper Room who were waiting in fearful expectation, she, fully aware of the importance of her Son's promise to the disciples (cf. Jn 14:16), helped the community to be well disposed to the coming of the "Paraclete".

Thus, while her unique experience made her ardently long for the Spirit's coming, it also involved her in preparing the minds and hearts of those around her.

3. During that prayer in the Upper Room, in an attitude of deep communion with the Apostles, with some women and with Jesus' "brethren", the Mother of the Lord prays for the gift of the Spirit for herself and for the community.

It was appropriate that the first outpouring of the Spirit upon her, which had happened in view of her divine motherhood, should be repeated and reinforced. Indeed, at the foot of the Cross Mary was entrusted with a new motherhood, which concerned Jesus' disciples. It was precisely this mission that demanded a renewed gift of the Spirit. The Blessed Virgin therefore wanted it for the fruitfulness of her spiritual motherhood.

While at the moment of the Incarnation the Holy Spirit had descended upon her as a person called to take part worthily in the great mystery, everything is now accomplished for the sake of the Church, whose image, model and mother Mary is called to be.

In the Church and for the Church, mindful of Jesus' promise, she waits for Pentecost and implores a multiplicity of gifts for everyone, in accordance with each one's personality and mission.

4. Mary's prayer has particular significance in the Christian community: it fosters the coming of the Spirit, imploring his action in the hearts of the disciples and in the world. Just as in the Incarnation the Spirit had formed the physical body of Christ in her virginal womb, now in the Upper Room the same Spirit comes down to give life to the Mystical Body.

Thus Pentecost is also a fruit of the Blessed Virgin's incessant prayer, which is accepted by the Paraclete with special favour because it is an expression of her motherly love for the Lord's disciples.

In contemplating Mary's powerful intercession as she waits for the Holy Spirit, Christians of every age have frequently had recourse to her intercession on the long and tiring journey to salvation, in order to receive the gifts of the Paraclete in greater abundance.

5. Responding to the prayer of the Blessed Virgin and the community gathered in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit bestows the fullness of his gifts on the Blessed Virgin and

those present, working a deep transformation in them for the sake of spreading the Good News. The Mother of Christ and his disciples are granted new strength and new apostolic energy for the Church's growth. In particular, the outpouring of the Spirit leads Mary to exercise her spiritual motherhood in an exceptional way, through her presence imbued with charity and her witness of faith.

In the nascent Church she passes on to the disciples her memories of the Incarnation, the infancy, the hidden life and the mission of her divine Son as a priceless treasure, thus helping to make him known and to strengthen the faith of believers.

We have no information about Mary's activity in the early Church, but we may suppose that after Pentecost her life would have continued to be hidden and discreet, watchful and effective. Since she was enlightened and guided by the Spirit, she exercised a deep influence on the community of the Lord's disciples.

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

I cordially greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially the groups from England, Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, the Philippines, Japan and the United States. Upon all of you and your families I invoke the joy and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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