



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

St. Peter's Square

Wednesday, 11 June 2014

Video

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

The gift of *fear of the Lord*, which we are speaking about today, concludes the series of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. It does not mean being afraid of God: we know well that God is Father, that he loves us and wants our salvation, and he always forgives, always; thus, there is no reason to be scared of him! Fear of the Lord, instead, is the gift of the Holy Spirit through whom we are reminded of how small we are before God and of his love and that our good lies in humble, respectful and trusting self-abandonment into his hands. This is fear of the Lord: abandonment in the goodness of our Father who loves us so much.

1. When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts, he infuses us with consolation and peace, and he leads us to the awareness of how small we are, with that attitude — strongly recommended by Jesus in the Gospel — of one who places his every care and expectation in God and feels enfolded and sustained by his warmth and protection, just as a child with his father! This is what the Holy Spirit does in our hearts: he makes us feel like children in the arms of our father. In this sense, then, we correctly comprehend how fear of the Lord in us takes on the form of docility, gratitude and praise, by filling our hearts with hope. Indeed, we frequently fail to grasp the plan of God, and we realize that we are not capable of assuring ourselves of happiness and eternal life. It is precisely in experiencing our own limitations and our poverty, however, that the Holy Spirit comforts us and lets us perceive that the only important thing is to allow ourselves to be led by Jesus into the Father's arms.

2. This is why we need this gift of the Holy Spirit so much. Fear of the Lord allows us to be aware

that everything comes from grace and that our true strength lies solely in following the Lord Jesus and in allowing the Father to bestow upon us his goodness and his mercy. To open the heart, so that the goodness and mercy of God may come to us. This is what the Holy Spirit does through the gift of fear of the Lord: he opens hearts. The heart opens so that forgiveness, mercy, goodness and the caress of the Father may come to us, for as children we are infinitely loved.

3. When we are pervaded by fear of the Lord, then we are led to follow the Lord with humility, docility and obedience. This, however, is not an attitude of resignation, passivity or regret, but one of the wonder and joy of being a child who knows he is served and loved by the Father. Fear of the Lord, therefore, does not make of us Christians who are shy and submissive, but stirs in us courage and strength! It is a gift that makes of us Christians who are convinced, enthusiastic, who aren't submissive to the Lord out of fear but because we are moved and conquered by his love! To be conquered by the love of God! This is a beautiful thing. To allow ourselves to be conquered by this love of a father, who loves us so, loves us with all his heart.

Yet, we should take care, for the gift of God, the gift of fear of the Lord is also an "alarm" against the obstinacy of sin. When a person lives in evil, when one blasphemes against God, when one exploits others, when he tyrannizes them, when he lives only for money, for vanity, or power, or pride, then the holy fear of God sends us a warning: be careful! With all this power, with all this money, with all of your pride, with all your vanity, you will not be happy. No one can take it with them to the other side: not the money, power, vanity or pride. Nothing! We can only take the love that God the Father gives us, God's embrace, accepted and received by us with love. And we can take what we have done for others. Take care not to place your hope in money or pride, power or vanity, because they can promise you nothing good! I am thinking, for example, of people who have responsibility for others and allow themselves to become corrupt; do you think a corrupt person will be happy on the other side? No, all the fruit of his corruption has corrupted his heart and it will be difficult for him to go to the Lord. I am thinking of those who live off human trafficking or slave labour; do you think these people who traffic persons, who exploit people through slave labour have love for God in their hearts? No, they haven't fear of the Lord and they are not happy. They are not. I am thinking of those who manufacture weapons for fomenting wars; just think about what kind of job this is. I am certain that if I were to ask: how many of you manufacture weapons? No one, no one. These weapons manufacturers don't come to hear the Word of God! These people manufacture death, they are merchants of death and they make death into a piece of merchandise. May fear of the Lord make them understand that one day all things will come to an end and they will have to give account to God.

Dear friends, Psalm 34 tells us to pray like this: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them" (vv. 6-7). Let us ask the Lord for the grace to unite our voice to that of the poor, to welcome the gift of fear of the Lord and to be able to recognize ourselves, together with them, as cloaked in the mercy and love of God, who is our Father, our dad. Let it be.

Greetings:

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims taking part in today's Audience, including those from England and Wales, Scotland, Sweden, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Japan, the Philippines, Australia and the United States. Upon all of you, and upon your families, I invoke the grace and peace of the Lord Jesus and the manifold gifts of the Holy Spirit. God bless you all!

Tomorrow, 12 June, we celebrate the World Day Against Child Labour. Tens of millions of children — did you hear that? — tens of millions are forced to work in degrading conditions, exposed to forms of slavery and exploitation, as well as abuse, maltreatment and discrimination.

I strongly hope that the international community can extend its social protection over minors in order to weaken this scourge of child exploitation. Let us renew our commitment, especially families, in order to ensure every boy and girl the safeguarding of his or her dignity and the opportunity for healthy development. A serene childhood allows children to look out with trust at life and the future. I invite all of you to pray to Our Lady, who held the Child Jesus in her arms, for these boys and girls who are being exploited through work and also abuse. *Hail Mary...*

I address a special thought to *young people*, the *sick* and *newlyweds*. In the month of June the liturgy invites us to pray to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. May this devotion teach you, dear *young people*, especially couples from the Diocese of Oria accompanied by Bishop Vincenzo Pisanello, to love with the same intensity; may it make you strong, dear *sick people*, in carrying your suffering cross with patience; and may it be a support to you, dear *newlyweds*, in building your family on fidelity and fear of the Lord.