



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 23 May 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

After the catecheses on Baptism, these days which follow the Solemnity of Pentecost invite us to reflect on the witness that the Spirit inspires in the baptized, setting their life in motion, opening it to the good of others. Jesus entrusted a great mission to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth; You are the light of the world” (cf. Mt 5:13-16). These are images that lead us to consider our behaviour, because both a lack and an excess of salt spoil the taste of food, just as a lack or an excess of light impede vision. Only the Spirit of Christ can truly become the salt that gives flavour and protects against corruption, and the light that illuminates the world! And this is the gift we receive in the Sacrament of Confirmation, or Chrismation, on which I would like to pause and reflect with you. It is called ‘*Confirmation*’ because it *confirms* Baptism and strengthens its grace (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1289); and also ‘*Chrismation*’, from the fact that we receive the Spirit through the anointing with ‘*Chrism*’ — a fragrant oil mixture consecrated by the Bishop —, a term which refers to *Christ Anointed* by the Holy Spirit.

The first step is being reborn to divine life in Baptism; it is important to behave as children of God, or to conform ourselves to Christ who works in the Holy Church, allowing us to engage in his mission in the world. This is what the anointing of the Holy Spirit foresees: “without His strength, man has nothing” (cf. Sequence for Pentecost). Without the power of the Holy Spirit we can do nothing: it is the Spirit who gives us the power to go forth. As Jesus’ entire life was enlivened by the Spirit, so too is the life of the Church and of each of her members under the guidance of the same Spirit.

Conceived by the Blessed Virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus undertakes his mission after, having emerged from the water of the Jordan, he is consecrated by the Spirit who descends

and remains upon him (cf. Mk 1:10; Jn 1:32). He proclaims this explicitly in the Synagogue of Nazareth: it is beautiful how Jesus presents himself, which is Jesus' identity card in the Synagogue of Nazareth! Let us hear how he does it: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor" (Lk 4:18). Jesus presents himself in the Synagogue of his village as the Anointed One, the One who was anointed by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit and is the source of the Spirit promised by the Father (cf. Jn 15:26; Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8, 2:33). In reality, on the evening of Easter, the Risen One breathes on his disciples, saying to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22); and on the Day of Pentecost the power of the Spirit descends upon the Apostles in an extraordinary form (cf. Acts 2:1-4), as we know.

The "Breath" of the Risen Christ fills the Church's lungs with life; and in effect the mouths of the disciples, "filled with the Holy Spirit", are opened in order to proclaim to all the great works of God (cf. Acts 2:1-11).

Pentecost — which we celebrated last Sunday — is for the Church what was for Christ the anointing of the Spirit received at the Jordan, that is, Pentecost is the missionary impulse to expend life for the sanctification of mankind, to the glory of God. If the Spirit works in every sacrament, it is in a special way that in Confirmation "the faithful receive the Holy Spirit as a Gift" (Paul vi, Apostolic Constitution *Divinae Consortium Naturae*). And at the moment of anointing, the Bishop says these words: "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit": the Holy Spirit is God's great gift. And we all have the Spirit within. The Spirit is in our heart, in our soul. And the Spirit guides us in life so that we may become the true salt and the true light for mankind.

If in Baptism it is the Holy Spirit who immerses us in Christ, then in Confirmation it is Christ who fills us with his Spirit, consecrating us as his witnesses, participants in the same principle of life and of mission, according to the design of the heavenly Father. The witness given by the confirmed shows reception of the Holy Spirit and docility to his creative inspiration. I wonder: how can one see that we have received the Gift of the Spirit? If we fulfil the works of the Spirit, if we speak the words instructed by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 2:13). Christian witness consists in doing only and all that the Spirit of Christ asks of us, giving us the strength to accomplish it.

Appeal and Special Greetings

Tomorrow, 24 May, the annual Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary "Help of Christians" will be celebrated. She is particularly venerated in the Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai, China.

This occasion invites us to be united spiritually with all the Catholic faithful who live in China. Let us pray for them to Our Lady, that they may live the faith with generosity and peace, and that they

may be able to perform practical gestures of fraternity, harmony and reconciliation, in full communion with the Successor of Peter.

Dearest disciples of the Lord in China, the universal Church prays with you and for you so that despite difficulties you may continue to entrust yourselves to God's will. Our Lady will never leave you lacking her help and will protect you with her motherly love.

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly those from England, Wales, Ireland, India, the Philippines, Russia, Vietnam, Canada and the United States of America. In the continuing joy of our celebration of Pentecost, I invoke upon you and your families a rich outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord bless you all!

In a particular way I entrust to Our Lady the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newlyweds* who are here today. I exhort you all to value praying the Holy Rosary in this month of May. Let us invoke the intercession of the Virgin Mary, so that the Lord may grant peace and mercy to the Church and to the entire world.