



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE*

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 6 June 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Continuing our reflection on the Sacrament of Confirmation, let us consider the effects that the gift of the Holy Spirit ripens in the newly confirmed, leading them to become, in their turn, a gift to others. The Holy Spirit is a gift. Let us remember that when the bishop anoints us with the oil he says: "Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". That gift of the Holy Spirit enters us and makes us fruitful, so that we can then give him to others. Receiving is always for giving: never receive and keep things within, as if the soul were a storehouse. No: receiving is always for giving. God's grace is received to be given to others. This is the life of a Christian. Indeed it pertains to the Holy Spirit who shifts us from our 'I' in order to open us up to the 'we' of the community: receiving in order to give. We are not at the centre: we are an instrument of that gift for others.

Completing the likeness to Christ in those who are baptized, Confirmation *unites them more closely as living members to the mystical body of the Church* (cf. *Rite of Confirmation*, n. 22). The Church's mission in the world proceeds through the contribution of all those who are part of her. Some think there are bosses in the Church: the Pope, the bishops, the priests, and then there are the others. No: the Church is all of us! And we all have the responsibility to sanctify one another, to take care of the others. The Church is all of us. Each one has his or her work in the Church, but she is all of us. Indeed, we should think of the Church as a living organism, made up of people we know and with whom we journey, and not as an abstract and distant reality. The Church is we who are journeying; the Church is we who are in this Square today. We: this is the Church. Confirmation binds us to the universal Church spread throughout the world, at the same time, actively involving confirmands in the life of the particular Church to which they belong, with the Bishop, who is the successor of the Apostles, at the helm.

This is why the Bishop is the *original minister* of Confirmation (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 26), because he introduces the confirmand into the Church. The fact that in the Latin Church this sacrament is usually conferred by the bishop demonstrates clearly that “its effect is to unite those who receive it more closely to the Church, to her apostolic origins, and to her mission of bearing witness to Christ” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1313).

This ecclesial incorporation is well demonstrated by the sign of peace which concludes the Rite of Confirmation. Indeed the Bishop says to each confirmand: “Peace be with you”. Recalling Christ’s greeting to the disciples on the evening of Easter, filled with the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 20:19-23) — as we have heard —, these words illuminate a gesture which “demonstrates ecclesial communion with the bishop and with all the faithful” (cf. CCC, n. 1301). In Confirmation, we receive the Holy Spirit and peace: that peace that we must give to others. But let us think: each one think of his or her own parish community, for example. There is the ceremony of Confirmation, and then we offer each other peace: the Bishop offers it to the confirmand, and then in the Mass, we exchange it among ourselves. This signifies harmony; it signifies charity among us; it signifies peace. But then what happens? We go out and begin to speak ill of others, to “excoriate” others. Gossip begins. And gossip is war. This will not do! If we have received the sign of peace with the power of the Holy Spirit, we must be men and women of peace, and not destroy, with the tongue, the peace that the Holy Spirit has created. Poor Holy Spirit: the work we give him, with this habit of gossiping! Think carefully: gossip is not the work of the Holy Spirit; it is not the work of unity in the Church. Gossip destroys what God has made. Please: let us stop gossiping!

Confirmation is received only once, but the spiritual dynamism inspired by the holy anointing perseveres over time. We will never finish fulfilling the mandate to diffuse everywhere the good fragrance of a holy life, inspired by the fascinating simplicity of the Gospel.

No one receives Confirmation for oneself alone, but to cooperate in the spiritual growth of others. Only in this way, by opening and coming out of ourselves to meet our brothers and sisters, can we truly grow and not merely delude ourselves of doing so. In fact what we receive as the gift of God must be given — the gift is to be given — in order to be fruitful, and not instead buried due to selfish fears, as the Parable of the Talents teaches (cf. Mt 25:14-30). The seed too: when we have the seed in hand, it to be sown, not put away, in the dresser, to be left there. We have to give the gift of the Holy Spirit to the community. I exhort confirmands not to “confine” the Holy Spirit, not to resist the Wind that blows, that pushes them to walk in freedom; not to smother the ardent Fire of charity that leads one to expend one’s life for God and for brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit grant to all of us the apostolic courage to communicate the Gospel, in deed and word, to those we meet on our way. With deeds and words, but good words: those which build up. Not the words of gossip, which destroy. Please, when you leave the church, consider that the peace received is to be given to others: not for destroying with gossip. Do not forget this.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly those from Ireland, Norway, Nigeria, China, the Philippines, Vietnam and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Friday marks the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. For the whole month of June I invite you to pray to the Heart of Jesus and to support your priests with closeness and affection, so they may be the image of that Heart filled with merciful love.

I offer a special thought to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Draw from the Heart of Jesus the food and spiritual drink of your life, so that, nourished by Christ, you may be new people, deeply transformed in that divine love.

“The Holy Father, deeply saddened upon learning the distressing news of the violent eruption of the Volcán de Fuego which claimed many victims and caused great material damage affecting a significant number of the area's inhabitants, offers suffrage for the eternal rest of the people who have died, and prayers for all those who are suffering the consequences of this natural disaster”. These are the words Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin addressed to Bishop Nicolas Thévenin, Apostolic Nuncio in Guatemala, in a telegram he sent on behalf of the Pontiff. The Cardinal also extended the Pontiff's “consolation to family members who are mourning the loss of their loved ones”, and his “spiritual closeness to the injured and to those who are working tirelessly to help the victims”. The Holy Father, the telegram concludes, “asks the Lord to pour out upon all of them the gifts of solidarity, spiritual serenity and Christian hope, and, as a token of all this, imparts to them his heartfelt Apostolic Blessing”.

According to local authorities nearly 100 people have died and some 200 remain missing.