



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday 16 December 1998

1. “I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father” (*Jn* 16:28).

With these words of Jesus, today we begin a new cycle of catecheses focused on the figure of the God the Father, thus following the thematic guide offered by *Tertio millennio adveniente* in preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

In the first year’s cycle, we reflected on Jesus Christ the one Saviour. Indeed, as a celebration of the Son of God’s entry into human history, the Jubilee has a strong Christological tone. We meditated on the meaning of time, which reached its focal point in the Redeemer’s birth 2,000 years ago. While this event inaugurates the Christian era, it also opens a new phase of renewal for humanity and the universe, in expectation of Christ’s last coming.

Then, in the catecheses of the second year of preparation for the Jubilee, our attention was turned to the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent from the Father. We reflected on him in the work of creation and in history, as Person-Love and Person-Gift. We emphasized his power, which draws out of chaos a cosmos rich in order and beauty. Divine life is communicated in him, and with him history becomes the way to salvation.

We now want to spend the third year of preparation for the now imminent Jubilee as a pilgrimage to the Father’s house. Thus we set out on the journey which, starting from the Father, leads creatures back to the Father, in accordance with the loving plan fully revealed in Christ. The journey to the Jubilee must become a great act of praise to the Father (cf. *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 49), so that in him the whole Trinity may be glorified.

2. The starting point for our reflection are the words of the Gospel which show us Jesus as the Son and Revealer of the Father. His teaching, his ministry, his very style of life, everything in him refers to the Father (cf. *Jn* 5:19, 36; 8:28; 14:10; 17:6). The Father is the centre of Jesus' life, and Jesus in turn is the only way which gives us access to him. "No one comes to the Father, but by me" (*Jn* 14:6). Jesus is the meeting-point of human beings with the Father, who is made visible in him: "He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" (*Jn* 14:9-10).

The most expressive manifestation of Jesus' relationship with the Father is his condition after the Resurrection, the summit of his mission and the foundation of new and eternal life for those who believe in him. But the union between the Son and the Father, like that between the Son and believers, comes through the mystery of the "lifting up" of Jesus, according to a characteristic expression of John's Gospel. With the term "lifting up", the Evangelist indicates both the crucifixion and the glorification of Christ; both are reflected on the believer: "So must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (*Jn* 3:14-16).

This "eternal life" is no less than the participation of believers in the very life of the risen Jesus and consists in their insertion into the movement of love uniting the Father and the Son, who are one (cf. *Jn* 10:30; 17:21-22).

3. The deep communion in which the Father, the Son and believers meet includes the Holy Spirit, for he is the eternal bond that unites the Father and the Son and involves human beings in this ineffable mystery of love. Given to them as the "Consoler", the Spirit "dwells" in the disciples of Christ (cf. *Jn* 14:16-17), making the Trinity present.

According to the Evangelist John, Jesus says to his disciples, precisely when he is promising to send the Paraclete: "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (*Jn* 14:20).

It is the Holy Spirit who introduces man into the mystery of the Trinitarian life. "The Spirit of truth" (*Jn* 15:26; 16:13), he acts deep within believers, making the Truth that is Christ shine in their minds.

4. St Paul also stresses our orientation to the Father through the Spirit of Christ who dwells in us. For the Apostle this is a true sonship, which enables us to call God the Father by the same familiar name that Jesus used: *Abba* (cf. *Rom* 8:15).

All creation is involved in this new dimension of our relationship with God, and "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" (*Rom* 8:19). Creation has also "been groaning in travail together until now" (*Rom* 8:22), in expectation of the total redemption that will re-establish

and perfect the harmony of the cosmos in Christ.

In describing this mystery which unites human beings and all creation with the Father, the Apostle expresses the role of Christ and the action of the Spirit. It was through Christ, “the image of the invisible God” (*Col* 1:15), that all things were created.

He is “the beginning, the first-born from the dead” (*Col* 1:18). In him “all things are united, things in heaven and things on earth” (cf. *Eph* 1:10), and it is his task to deliver them to the Father (cf. *1 Cor* 15:24), so that God may be “everything to everyone” (*1 Cor* 15:28). This journey of humanity and the world to the Father is sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit, who helps us in our weakness and “intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (*Rom* 8:26).

Thus the New Testament introduces us very clearly into this movement which flows from the Father and back to the Father. Let us consider it with special attention in this final year of preparation for the Great Jubilee.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have just begun the year of preparation for the Great Jubilee dedicated to God the Father. In this year the whole Church is called to set out on a great pilgrimage to the Father’s house, so that the Jubilee will truly be a great hymn of praise to the Father who sent his Son into the world as our Redeemer.

Jesus lived his earthly life in perfect union with the Father, and he is the only way to the Father. Through the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection, we are given access to the life of the Risen Christ and are inserted into the movement of love joining the Father and the Son.

The eternal bond uniting the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit. He dwells in Christ’s disciples, making the Father and the Son present in them and introducing them into the mystery of the Trinitarian life. Saint Paul teaches us that the Holy Spirit enables us to call God “Abba” - “Father”, as Jesus did. The Spirit helps us in our weakness and “intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words” (*Rm* 8:26). He strengthens us on our journey to the Father. May this final year of preparation for the Jubilee enable all Christians to experience more fully what it means to be the adopted sons and daughters of God.

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

It is always a joy to welcome groups from Scandinavia and today I am happy to welcome the

students from Friaborgsskolan in Sweden. I extend a special greeting to the group from India of Daughters of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple. Upon all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially from the United States of America, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. To all of you, a Happy Christmas!