



# The Holy See

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## **MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER ON THE OCCASION OF THE 13TH WORLD YOUTH DAY**

*"The Holy Spirit will teach you all things" (cf. Jn 14:26).*

Dear Young Friends,

1. "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, thankful for your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:36).

I greet you with the words of the Apostle Paul "because I hold you in my heart" (ibid., 7). Yes - as I assured you on that unforgettable World Day celebrated in Paris - the Pope thinks about you and loves you; he reaches out to you daily with affectionate thoughts and accompanies you with prayer; he trusts you and counts on you, on your Christian commitment and on your collaboration in the Gospel cause.

*Holy Spirit makes Christ's Revelation present*

2. As you know, the second year of the preparatory phase of the Great Jubilee began with the First Sunday of Advent and is dedicated "in a particular way to the Holy Spirit and to his sanctifying presence within the community of Christ's disciples" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 44). With a view to the celebration of the next World Youth Day, I invite you, in communion with the whole Church, to look to the Spirit of the Lord, who renews the face of the earth (cf. Ps 104 [103]:30).

"The Church", in fact, "cannot prepare for the new millennium 'in any other way than in the Holy Spirit. What was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit 'in the fullness of time' can only through the Spirit's power now emerge from the memory of the Church. The Spirit, in fact, makes

present in the Church of every time and place the unique Revelation brought by Christ to humanity, making it alive and active in the soul of each individual" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 44).

For the next World Day, I consider it fitting to suggest these words of Jesus for your reflection and prayer: "The Holy Spirit will teach you all things" (cf. Jn 14:26). Our age appears disoriented and confused; sometimes it even seems no longer to know the difference between good and evil; God is apparently rejected, because he is unknown or ignored.

In this situation, it is important to go in spirit to the Upper Room, to relive the mystery of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1-11) and to "let [ourselves] be taught" by God's Spirit, docilely and humbly enrolling in his school, so as to acquire that "wisdom of heart" (Ps 90 [89]:12) which sustains and nourishes our life.

To believe is to see things as God sees them, to share God's vision of the world and of man according to the words of the psalm: "for in your light do we see light" (Ps 36 [35]:9). This "light of faith" in us is a ray of the Holy Spirit's light. In the Sequence of Pentecost we pray thus: "O most blessed light divine, shine within these hearts of thine, and our inmost being fill!".

Jesus thought it was important to stress the mysterious character of the Holy Spirit: "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit" (Jn 3:8). So should we give up trying to understand? Jesus thought precisely the contrary, since he assures us that the Holy Spirit himself can guide us "into all the truth" (Jn 16:13).

3. An extraordinary light on the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity comes to those who want to meditate in and with the Church on the mystery of Easter and Pentecost.

Jesus was "designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4).

After the Resurrection, the Teacher's presence warms the hearts of his disciples. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" (Lk 24:32), say the travelers on the road to Emmaus. His words enlighten them: never had they said with such strong conviction: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20:28). He heals them of doubt, sorrow, discouragement, fear and sin; a new brotherhood is given them; an unexpected communion with the Lord and with their brethren replaces their isolation and loneliness: "go to my brethren" (Jn 20:17).

During his public life, Jesus' words and actions could only reach a few thousand people in a given place and time. Now the same words and actions know no bounds of space or culture. "This is my body which is given for you.... This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for

you" (cf. Lk 22:19-20): it is enough for his Apostles to do this "in memory of him", in accordance with his explicit request, for he is truly present in the Eucharist, with his body and with his blood, in every part of the world. It is enough that they repeat the act of forgiveness and healing, so that he may pardon them: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven" (cf. Jn 20:23).

When he was with his own, Jesus was hurried; he was preoccupied about the limits of time: "My time has not yet come" (Jn 7:6); "The light is with you for a little longer" (Jn 12:35). After the Resurrection, his relationship with time is no longer the same, but his presence continues: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20).

This transformation in depth, extent and duration of our Lord and Saviour's presence is the work of the Spirit.

*Christ's work is fulfilled by the gift of the Holy Spirit*

4. Furthermore, when the risen Christ makes himself present in people's lives and gives them his Spirit (cf. Jn 20:22), they completely change, although they remain, indeed become, fully themselves. Paul's example is particularly significant: the blinding light on the road to Damascus made him a man freer than he had ever been; free with true freedom, that of the living One before whom he fell to the ground (cf. Acts 9:1-30)! His experience would enable him to write to the Christians of Rome: "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life" (Rom 6:22).

All that Jesus had begun to do with his followers in the three years of their life together is brought to fulfilment by the gift of the Spirit. The Apostles' faith is at first imperfect and hesitant, but later becomes strong and fruitful: he causes the lame to walk (cf. Acts 3:1-10), while he puts to flight unclean spirits (Acts 5:16). They who once trembled for fear of the people and the authorities confront the crowd gathered in the temple and challenge the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 4:1-14). Peter, whose fear of a woman's accusations had led him to make his triple denial (cf. Mk 14:66-72), now behaves like the "rock" that Jesus wanted (cf. Mt 16:18). Even the others, inclined until that moment to disputes caused by ambition (cf. Mk 9:33), can now be "of one heart and soul" and share everything (cf. Acts 4:32). They who had learned from Jesus so imperfectly and with such difficulty how to pray, love and go out on mission, now truly pray, truly love, are truly missionaries and truly apostles.

This is the work that the Spirit of Jesus accomplishes in his Apostles!

5. What happened yesterday continues to happen in the Christian community today. Through the work of the One who is the "living remembrance" of Jesus (cf. Jn 14:26) in the heart of the Church, Jesus' paschal mystery reaches and transforms us. He is the Holy Spirit who, through the visible, audible and tangible signs of the sacraments, permits us to see, listen and touch humanity

glorified by the risen Christ.

The mystery of Pentecost, as a gift of the Spirit to each one, is made present in a privileged way by Confirmation, which is the sacrament of Christian growth and spiritual maturity. In it, each member of the faithful receives a deepening of the baptismal grace and is fully inserted into the messianic and apostolic community, while he is "confirmed" in that familiarity with the Father and with Christ, who wants him to be a witness and to play an active role in the work of salvation.

The Holy Spirit gives the Christian - whose life would otherwise risk being subject only to force, to rules and even to external conformism - docility, freedom and fidelity: indeed, he is the "Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (Is 11:2). Without him, how could we understand that Christ's yoke is easy and his burden light (cf. Mt 11:30)?

The Holy Spirit makes us bold and urges us to contemplate God's glory in our daily life and work. It spurs us to experience the mystery of Christ, to make the Word resound in our whole life, in the certainty that he will always have something new to say; he helps us to be ever committed despite our fear of failure, to face dangers and overcome the barriers that separate cultures in order to proclaim the Gospel, to work tirelessly for the continuous renewal of the Church without setting ourselves up as judges of our brothers and sisters.

*Gift of the Holy Spirit is at the root of every vocation*

6. In writing to the Christians of Corinth, Paul insists on the basic unity of God's Church, which is comparable to the organic unity of the human body in the diversity of its members.

Dear young people, today, every time you gather especially for a Eucharistic celebration, you are having a valuable experience of the Church's unity in the richness of her diversity. It is the Spirit who brings human beings to understand and accept one another, to recognize that they are children of God and brothers and sisters on their way towards the same goal, eternal life, and to speak the same language over and above divisions of culture or race.

By participating actively and generously in the life of the parishes, movements and associations, you are experiencing how the charisms of the Spirit help you to encounter Christ, to increase your familiarity with him and to achieve and enjoy ecclesial communion.

To speak of unity leads one to recall with sorrow the current state of separation between Christians. This is why ecumenism is one of the Christian community's most urgent priorities: "In these last years of the millennium, the Church should invoke the Holy Spirit with ever greater insistence, imploring from him the grace of Christian unity.... We are all however aware that the attainment of this goal cannot be the fruit of human efforts alone, vital though they are. Unity, after

all, is a gift of the Holy Spirit.... The approaching end of the second millennium demands of everyone an examination of conscience and the promotion of fitting ecumenical initiatives" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 34). Dear young people, I also entrust this concern and this hope to you, as a commitment and a task.

Again, it is the Spirit who inspires the Church's evangelizing mission. Before his Ascension, Jesus said to the Apostles: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Since then, under the impetus of the Spirit, Jesus' disciples have continued to be present on the paths of the world to proclaim the saving word to all men. Amid successes and failures, amid greatness and misery, with the power of the Spirit who acts in human weakness, the Church discovers the full breadth and responsibility of her universal mission.

In order to carry it out, she also calls on you, on your generosity and docility to God's Spirit.

7. The gift of the Spirit makes God's ancient commandment to his people timely and possible: "You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lv 19:2) To become holy seems a difficult goal, reserved for people who are quite exceptional, or suited to those who wish to remain apart from the life and culture of their own time. Instead, to become holy is a gift and a task, rooted in Baptism and Confirmation and entrusted to everyone in the Church in every age. It is a gift and a duty of lay people as well as religious and sacred ministers, in the private realm as in public affairs, in the life of individuals as in that of families and communities.

However within this common vocation that calls everyone to be conformed not to this world but to God's will (cf. Rom 12:2), there are different states of life and numerous vocations and missions.

The gift of the Spirit is the basis of everyone's vocation. It is at the root of the consecrated ministries of the Bishop, priest and deacon, who are at the service of ecclesial life. It is also he who forms and moulds the soul of those who are called to a life of special consecration, configuring them to Christ, chaste, poor and obedient. In the Spirit himself, who through the sacrament of Marriage surrounds and consecrates the union of the spouses, the mission of parents, called to make the family the first and fundamental expression of the Church, finds its strength and support. Lastly, the many other services oriented to building up and giving life to the community are nourished by the gift of the Spirit - Christian education and catechesis, care of the sick and the poor, human advancement and the exercise of charity. In fact, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7).

*Familiarity with Jesus leads us to act as he did*

8. It is therefore indispensable for each one to seek and to recognize day after day the long path on which the Lord is leading him to his personal encounter with him. Dear friends, question

yourselves seriously about your vocation and be ready to answer the Lord who is calling you to take the place he has prepared for you from eternity.

Experience teaches that in this work of discernment the figure of the spiritual director is of great help: choose a competent person recommended by the Church, who will listen to you and guide you on the path of life, who will be close to you in difficult choices and in moments of joy. Your spiritual director will help you discern the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and progress on a path of freedom: freedom to be won by spiritual combat (cf. Eph 6: 13-17), which should be lived with constancy and perseverance.

Education in Christian life is not limited to encouraging the individual's spiritual growth, even if initiation into a solid, regular life of prayer remains the principle and foundation of the building. Familiarity with the Lord, when it is genuine, necessarily leads us to think, choose and act as Christ thought, chose and acted, putting ourselves at his disposal in order to continue his saving work.

A "spiritual life", which puts us in contact with God's love and reproduces the image of Jesus in the Christian, can remedy one of our century's ills, the overdevelopment of technical rationality and the underdevelopment of attention to man, his expectations and his mystery. There is an urgent need to rebuild an inner universe which is inspired and sustained by the Spirit, nourished by prayer and geared to action, so that it is strong enough to resist the many situations in which we should remain faithful to a project rather than follow or conform to the current mentality.

9. Mary, unlike the disciples, did not wait for the Resurrection to live, pray and act in the fullness of the Spirit. The *Magnificat* expresses the full prayer, the full missionary zeal, the full joy of the Church of Easter and Pentecost (cf. Lk 1:46-55).

When, taking the logic of his love to its final conclusion, God took Mary up to heaven in body and soul, the ultimate mystery was fulfilled: she, whom Jesus crucified had given as mother to the disciple he loved (cf. Jn 19:26-27), henceforth lives her motherly presence in the heart of the Church beside each one of her Son's disciples and participates uniquely in Christ's eternal intercession for the world's salvation.

To her, the Spouse of the Spirit, I entrust the preparation and celebration of the 13th World Youth Day, which you will spend this year in your local Churches, gathered round your Pastors.

I address her, the Mother of the Church, together with you, in the words of St Ildefonsus of Toledo:

*"I pray you, I pray you, O Blessed Virgin,  
that I may receive Jesus from that Spirit  
from whom you yourself begot Jesus.*

*May my soul receive Jesus through the power of  
that Spirit through whom your flesh conceived  
Jesus himself.*

*May I love Jesus in that same Spirit  
in whom you adore him as Lord  
and contemplate him as Son".*

I cordially bless you all.

*From the Vatican, 30 November 1997, the First Sunday of Advent.*