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General Audience

This morning's general audience took place in Saint Peter's Square. The Holy Father Francis continued his catechesis on the Acts of the Apostles. The bible passage was *Tongues of fire* (*Acts of the Apostles*, 2: 3).

After summaries of the catechesis in various languages, the Pope greeted the groups of faithful from all over the world present in the square. The general audience concluded with the recitation of the *Pater Noster* and the apostolic blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Fifty days after Easter, in that cenacle that was by then their home and where the presence of Mary, Mother of the Lord, was the cohesive element, the Apostles experienced an event that exceeded their expectations. Gathered in prayer – prayer is the “lung” that gives breath to disciples of all times, without prayer it is not possible to be a disciple of Jesus, without prayer we cannot be Christians! It is the air, it is the lung of Christian life – they are surprised by the *irruption of God*. It is an *irruption that does not tolerate being closed: it throws open the doors* with the force of a wind that recalls the *ruah*, the primordial breath, and fulfils the promise of “strength” made by the Risen Christ before He took leave of them (see *Acts* 1: 8). Suddenly “a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting” (*Acts* 2: 2). The wind was then joined by the fire that recalls the burning bush and Sinai with the gift of the ten words (see *Ex* 19: 16-19). In the biblical tradition the fire accompanies the manifestation of God. In the fire God delivers His living and energetic word (see *Heb* 4: 12) which opens up to the future; fire expresses symbolically His work of warming, illuminating and infusing wisdom in hearts, His care in proving the resistance of human works, in purifying them and revitalizing them. While at Sinai the voice of God is heard, in Jerusalem, on the feast of Pentecost, it is Peter who speaks, the rock on which Christ chose to build His Church. Though His word is weak and even capable of denying the Lord. when the fire of the Spirit passes through it, it gains strength, becomes capable of piercing hearts and moving to conversion. God in fact chooses what is weak in the world to confuse

the strong (see *1 Cor 1: 27*).

The Church is thus born of the fire of love, and of a “fire” that breaks out at Pentecost and which manifests the strength of the Word of the Risen One imbued with the Holy Spirit. *The new and definitive Covenant is founded no longer on a law written on stone tablets, but on the action of the Spirit of God Who makes all things new and is engraved in hearts of flesh.*

The word of the Apostles is imbued with the Spirit of the Risen One and becomes a new word, different, that can however be understood, as if it were translated simultaneously into all the languages: indeed, “each one heard their own language being spoken” (*Acts 2: 6*). It is the *language of truth and love*, which is the *universal language*: even the illiterate can understand it. Everyone understands the language of truth and love. If you go with the truth of your heart, with sincerity, and you go with love, everyone will understand you. Even if you cannot talk, but with a caress, that is truthful and loving.

The Holy Spirit not only manifests Himself through *a symphony of sounds that unite and harmonically form diversity*, but presents Himself as the conductor of an orchestra that plays the scores of praises for the “great works” of God. The Holy Spirit is the *creator of communion, the artist of reconciliation* who knows how to remove barriers between Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen, to make a single body. He builds up the community of believers, harmonizing the unity of the body and the multiplicity of the members. He makes the Church grow by helping her to go beyond human limits, sins and any scandal.

The wonder is so great, that one might ask if those men were drunk. Peter then intervenes on behalf of all of the Apostles, and rereads the event in the light of Joel 3, where a new effusion of the Holy Spirit is announced. Jesus’ followers are not drunk, but they live what Saint Ambrose defines as the “sober intoxication of the Spirit”, which ignites prophecy in the midst of the people of God through dreams and visions. This prophetic gift is not reserved just to a few, but to all those who invoke the name of the Lord.

From then on, from that moment, the Spirit of God moves hearts to welcome the salvation that passes through a Person, Jesus Christ, He Whom men nailed to the wood of the cross and Whom God revived from the dead, “freeing Him from the agony of death” (*Acts 2: 24*). And He emitted that Spirit that orchestrates the polyphony of praise and which all may hear. As Benedict XVI said, “Pentecost is this: Jesus, and through Him God Himself, actually comes to us and draws us to Himself” (*Homily*, 3 June 2006). The Spirit works through divine attraction: God seduces us with His love and thus involves us, to move history and initiate processes whereby new life filters through. Indeed, only the Spirit of God has the power to *humanize* and *fraternize* every context, starting from those who welcome Him.

Let us ask the Lord to let us experience a new Pentecost, which opens up our hearts and harmonizes our sentiments with those of Christ, so that we are able to announce His transforming word without shame, and bear witness to the power of love that recalls to live all that which it encounters.

Greeting in English

I welcome all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, especially those from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Australia, India, Indonesia, Canada and the United States of America. My special greeting goes to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Youth Peace Messengers from Japan. I also greet the winners of the traditional Bible Contest of the Holy Land. Upon all of you I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

At the end of the audience the Pope greeted, among others, the pilgrims from the diocese of Léon, a accompanied by their bishop, Msgr. Julián López Martín. Addressing Polish pilgrims, he mentioned that tomorrow will be the feast of Corpus Christi, “a special opportunity to revive our faith in the real presence of the

Lord in the Eucharist. The celebration of Holy Mass, Eucharistic adoration and the processions in the streets of towns and villages are testimony of our veneration and following of Christ Who gives us His Body and Blood, to nourish us with His love and to make us participants in His life in the glory of the Father.

The day after tomorrow will be the liturgical memory of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, an admirable example of austerity and evangelical purity. "Invoke him to help you build a friendship with Jesus that enables you to face your life with serenity", said the Holy Father.
