

Pope Francis reflects on the work and power of the Holy Spirit

"Let's ask ourselves: are we open to the Holy Spirit...?"

May 15, 2013



Below is a Vatican Radio translation of the Holy Father's general audience catechesis Wednesday May 15, 2013:

Dear brothers and sisters, good day! Today I want to focus on the action that the Holy Spirit accomplishes in guiding the Church and each one of us to the Truth. Jesus says to his disciples: the Holy Spirit, "he will guide you to all truth" (Jn 16:13), he himself being "the Spirit of truth" (cf. Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). We live in an age rather skeptical of truth. Benedict XVI has spoken many times of relativism, that is, the tendency to believe that nothing is definitive, and think that

the truth is given by consent or by what we want. The question arises: does “the” truth really exist? What is “the” truth? Can we know it? Can we find it?

Here I am reminded of the question of the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate when Jesus reveals the profound meaning of his mission: “What is truth?” (Jn 18,37.38). Pilate does not understand that “the” Truth is in front of him, he cannot see in Jesus the face of the truth, which is the face of God yet, Jesus is just that: the Truth, which, in the fullness of time, “became flesh” (Jn 1,1.14), came among us so that we may know it. You cannot grab the truth as if it were an object, you encounter it. It is not a possession, is an encounter with a Person.

But who helps us recognize that Jesus is “the” Word of truth, the only begotten Son of God the Father? St. Paul teaches that “no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). It is the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Risen Christ, that helps us recognize the Truth. Jesus calls him the “Paraclete”, meaning “the one who comes to our aid,” who is by our side to support us in this journey of knowledge, and at the Last Supper, Jesus assures his disciples that the Holy Spirit will teach them all things , reminding them of his words (cf. Jn 14:26).

What is then the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of the Church to guide us to the truth? First of all, remind and imprint on the hearts of believers the words that Jesus said, and precisely through these words, God’s law – as the prophets of the Old Testament had announced – is inscribed in our hearts and becomes within us a principle of evaluation in our choices and of guidance in our daily actions, it becomes a principle of life. Ezekiel’s great prophecy is realized: “I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean; from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. ...I will put my spirit within you so that you walk in my statutes, observe my ordinances, and keep them”(36:25-27). Indeed, our actions are born from deep within: it is the heart that needs to be converted to God, and the Holy Spirit transforms it if we open ourselves to Him

The Holy Spirit, then, as Jesus promises, guides us “into all truth” (Jn 16:13) he leads us not only to an encounter with Jesus, the fullness of Truth, but guides us “into” the Truth, that is, he helps us enter into a deeper communion with Jesus himself, gifting us knowledge of the things of God. We cannot achieve this on our own strengths. If God does not enlightens us interiorly, our being Christians will be superficial. The Tradition of the Church affirms that the Spirit of truth acts in our hearts, provoking that “sense of faith” (sensus fidei), through which, as the Second Vatican Council affirms, the People of God, under the guidance of the Magisterium, adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints,

(113) penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life (cf. Dogmatic Constitution, “Lumen gentium”, 12).

Let’s ask ourselves: are we open to the Holy Spirit, do I pray to him to enlighten me, to make me more sensitive to the things of God? And this is a prayer we need to pray every day, every day: Holy Spirit may my heart be open to the Word of God, may my heart be open to good, may my heart be open to the beauty of God, every day. But I would like to ask a question to all of you: How many of you pray every day to the Holy Spirit? Eh, a few of you I bet, eh! Well, a few, few, a few, but we realise this wish of Jesus, pray every day for the Holy Spirit to open our hearts to Jesus.

We think of Mary who “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Lk 2,19.51). The reception of the words and the truths of faith so that they become life, is realized and grows under the action of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, we must learn from Mary, reliving her “yes”, her total availability to receive the Son of God in her life, and who from that moment was transformed. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son come to dwell in us: do we live in God and of God, is our life really animated by God? How many things do I put before God?

Dear brothers and sisters, we need to let ourselves be imbued with the light of the Holy Spirit, so that He introduces us into the Truth of God, who is the only Lord of our lives. In this Year of Faith let us ask ourselves if we have actually taken a few steps to get to know Christ and the truths of faith more, by reading and meditating on the Scriptures, studying the Catechism, steadily approaching the Sacraments. But at the same time let us ask ourselves what steps we are taking so that the faith directs our whole existence. Do not be a ‘part-time’ Christian, at certain moments, in certain circumstances, in certain choices, be Christian at all times! The truth of Christ, that the Holy Spirit teaches us and gives us, always and forever involves our daily lives. Let us invoke him more often, to guide us on the path of Christ’s disciples.