



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square
Wednesday, 15 May 2013

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today I would like to reflect on the Holy Spirit's action in guiding the Church and each one of us to the Truth. Jesus himself told his disciples: the Holy Spirit "will guide you into all the truth" (Jn 16:13), since he himself is "the Spirit of Truth" (cf. Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

We are living in an age in which people are rather sceptical of truth. Benedict xvi has frequently spoken of relativism, that is, of the tendency to consider nothing definitive and to think that truth comes from consensus or from something we like. The question arises: does "the" truth really exist? What is "the" truth? Can we know it? Can we find it? Here springs to my mind the question of Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator, when Jesus reveals to him the deep meaning of his mission: "What is truth?" (Jn 18:37, 38). Pilate cannot understand that "the" Truth is standing in front of him, he cannot see in Jesus the face of the truth that is the face of God. And yet Jesus is exactly this: the Truth that, in the fullness of time, "became flesh" (cf. Jn 1:1, 14), and came to dwell among us so that we might know it. The truth is not grasped as a thing, the truth is encountered. It is not a possession, it is an encounter with a Person.

But who can enable us to 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 himself, the gift of the Risen Christ, who makes us recognize the Truth. Jesus describes him as the "Paraclete", namely, "the one who comes to our aid", who is

beside us to sustain us on this journey of knowledge; and, at the Last Supper, Jesus assures the disciples that the Holy Spirit will teach them all things and remind them of all he has said to them (cf. Jn 14:26).

So how does the Holy Spirit act in our life and in the life of the Church in order to guide us to the truth? First of all he recalls and impresses in the heart of believers the words Jesus spoke and, through these very words, the law of God — as the Prophets of the Old Testament had foretold — is engraved in our heart and becomes within us a criterion for evaluation in decisions and for guidance in our daily actions; it becomes a principle to live by. Ezekiel's great prophesy is brought about: "You shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you.... And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances" (36:25-27). Indeed, it is in our inmost depths that our actions come into being: it is the heart itself that must be converted to God and the Holy Spirit transforms it when we open ourselves to him.

Then, as Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit guides us "into all the truth" (Jn 16:13); not only does he guide us to the encounter with Jesus, the fullness of the Truth, but he also guides us "into" the Truth, that is, he makes us enter into an ever deeper communion with Jesus, giving us knowledge of all the things of God. And we cannot achieve this by our own efforts. Unless God enlightens us from within, our Christian existence will be superficial. The Church's Tradition asserts that the Spirit of truth acts in our heart, inspiring that "sense of the faith" (*sensus fidei*) through which, as the Second Vatican Council states, the People of God, under the guidance of the Magisterium, adheres unfailingly to the faith transmitted, penetrates it more deeply with the right judgement, and applies it more fully in life (cf. Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12). Let us try asking ourselves: am I open to the action of the Holy Spirit? Do I pray him to give me illumination, to make me more sensitive to God's things?

This is a prayer we must pray every day: "Holy Spirit, make my heart open to the word of God, make my heart open to goodness, make my heart open to the beauty of God every day". I would like to ask everyone a question: how many of you pray every day to the Holy Spirit? There will not be many but we must fulfil Jesus' wish and pray every day to the Holy Spirit that he open our heart to Jesus.

Let us think of Mary who "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19, 51). Acceptance of the words and truth of faith so that they may become life is brought about and increases under the action of the Holy Spirit. In this regard we must learn from Mary, we must relive her "yes", her unreserved readiness to receive the Son of God in her life, which was transformed from that moment. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son take up their abode with us: we live in God and of God. Yet is our life truly inspired by God? How many things do I put before God?

Dear brothers and sisters, we need to let ourselves be bathed in the light of the Holy Spirit so that he may lead us into the Truth of God, who is the one Lord of our life. In this Year of Faith let us ask ourselves whether we really have taken some steps to know Christ and the truth of faith better by reading and meditating on Sacred Scripture, by studying the *Catechism* and by receiving the sacraments regularly. However, let us ask ourselves at the same time what steps we are taking to ensure that faith governs the whole of our existence. We are not Christian “part-time”, only at certain moments, in certain circumstances, in certain decisions; no one can be Christian in this way, we are Christian all the time! Totally! May Christ’s truth, which the Holy Spirit teaches us and gives to us, always and totally affect our daily life. Let us call on him more often so that he may guide us on the path of disciples of Christ. Let us call on him every day. I am making this suggestion to you: let us invoke the Holy Spirit every day, in this way the Holy Spirit will bring us close to Jesus Christ.

Greetings:

I address a special thought to the bishops, priests and faithful who have come from Sardinia. Dear friends, I thank you for coming and I warmly entrust you and your communities to the motherly intercession of the Virgin Most Holy, whom you venerate under the title of “Madonna di Bonaria”.

In this regard I would like to announce to you that I want to visit the Shrine at Cagliari — almost certainly in the month of September — since the cities of Buenos Aires and Cagliari are bound by a bond of brotherhood because of an ancient episode. At the very moment of the foundation of the town of Buenos Aires, its founder wanted to call it “Città della Santissima Trinità” [city of the Blessed Trinity], but the sailors who had taken him there were Sardinian and they wanted it to be called “Città della Madonna di Bonaria” [city of Our Lady of Good Air]. A quarrel flared up between them and in the end they found a compromise which resulted in a long name: “Città della Santissima Trinità e Porto di Nostra Signora di Bonaria” [city of the Blessed Trinity and Port of Our Lady of Bonaria]. However, since it was so long only the last two words [in Spanish] have stood the test of time: Bonaria, Buenos Aires, in memory of your icon, the Madonna di Bonaria.

I am pleased to greet the many English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today’s Audience, including those from England, Scotland, Sweden, Australia, India, Vietnam, Canada and the United States. As the Church prepares to celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, I pray that his gifts of wisdom, joy and peace will accompany you and your families along the path of authentic Christian discipleship. God bless you all!

Lastly I greet the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newlyweds*. During this month of May, dear *young people*, try to imitate the young woman of Nazareth, Mary. May she help you to be simple, pure in heart and to bring a ray of serenity to wherever there is loneliness and sorrow. I hope that you, dear *sick people*, with Mary’s help, may live your situation in trusting abandonment in the

Lord, God of every comfort. And you, dear *newlyweds*, may you always find joy and support in your reciprocal fidelity.