

"Come Holy Spirit"

In his 10 November general audience, Pope Francis ended his catechesis on Saint Paul's Letter to the Galatians, stressing the need to frequently invoke the Holy Spirit to come to our assistance.

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Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

We have reached the end of the catechesis on the *Letter to the Galatians*. We could have reflected

on so much other content contained in this writing of Saint Paul! The Word of God is an inexhaustible font. And in this letter, the Apostle has spoken to us as an evangeliser, as a theologian and as a pastor.

The holy bishop Ignatius of Antioch used a beautiful expression when he wrote: “There is then one Teacher, who spoke and it was done; while even those things which He did in silence are worthy of the Father. He who possesses the word of Jesus, is truly able to hear even His very silence” (*To the Ephesians*, 15, 1-2). We can say that the apostle Paul was capable of giving voice to this silence of God. His most original intuitions help us discover the shocking newness contained in the revelation of Jesus Christ. He was a true theologian who contemplated the mystery of Christ and transmitted it with his creative intelligence. And he was also capable of exercising his

pastoral mission towards a lost and confused community. He did this with different methods: from time to time he used irony, firmness, gentleness... He revealed his own authority as an apostle, but at the same time he did not hide the weaknesses of his character. The strength of the Spirit had truly entered his heart: his meeting with the Risen Christ conquered and transformed his entire life, and he spent it entirely at the service of the Gospel. This is Paul.

Paul never conceived of Christianity in peaceful terms, lacking bite and force — on the contrary. With such passion he defended the freedom Christ brought that it stills moves us today, especially if we think of the suffering and loneliness he must have endured. He was convinced that he had received a call to which he alone could respond; and he wanted to explain to the Galatians

that they too were called to that freedom which liberated them from every form of slavery because it made them heirs of the ancient promise and, in Christ, children of God. And aware of the risks that this concept of freedom brought, he never minimised the consequences. He was aware of the risks that Christian freedom brought. But he did not minimise the consequences. With *parrhesia*, that is, courageously, he repeated to the believers that freedom is in no way equal to debauchery, nor does it lead to forms of presumptuous self-sufficiency. Rather, Paul placed freedom in love's shadow and based its consistent exercise on the service of charity. This entire vision was set within the panorama of a life according to the Holy Spirit that brings to fulfillment the Law given by God to Israel and prevents falling back into the slavery of sin. But the temptation is always to go backward, right? One definition of

Christians found in the Scripture says that *we Christians are not the type of people who go backward*, who turn back. This is a beautiful definition. And the temptation is to turn back to be more secure. And in this case, to turn back to the Law, disregarding the new life of the Spirit. This is what Paul teaches us: the fulfillment of the true Law is found in this life of the Spirit given to us by Jesus. And this life of the Spirit can only be lived in freedom. Christian freedom. This is one of the most beautiful things, most beautiful.

At the end of this catechetical journey, it seems to me that a twofold attitude could rise within us. On the one hand, the Apostle's teaching generates *enthusiasm* in us; we feel drawn to follow immediately the way of freedom, to "walk according to the Spirit". Walking according to the Spirit always makes us free. On the other hand, we are aware of our

limitations because we are daily in touch with how difficult it is to be docile to the Spirit, to surrender to his beneficial action. Then *tiredness* can set it *that dampens enthusiasm*. We feel discouraged, weak, sometimes marginalised with respect to a worldly life-style. Saint Augustine, referring to the Gospel episode of the storm on the lake, suggests how to react in this situation. This is what he says: “The faith of Christ in your heart is like Christ in the boat. You hear insults, you wear yourself out, you are upset, and Christ sleeps. Wake Christ up, rouse your faith! Even in tribulation you can do something. Rouse your faith. Christ awakes and speaks to you... Therefore, wake Christ up... Believe what has been said to you, and there will be tremendous calm in your heart” (*Sermon 63*). Saint Augustine says here that in difficult moments it is like we are in the boat at the moment of the storm. And

what did the apostles do? They woke Christ up. Wake up Christ who sleeps and you are in the storm, but He is present. This is the only thing we can do in terrible moments: wake up Christ who is within us, but sleeps like [he did] in the boat. It is exactly like this. We must rouse Christ in our hearts and only then will we be able to contemplate things with his eyes for He sees beyond the storm.

Through that serene gaze, we can see a panorama that is not even conceivable on our own.

In this challenging but captivating journey, the Apostle reminds us that we cannot let ourselves tire when it comes to doing good. *“Let us not grow weary in well-doing”* (Gal 6:9).

We must trust that the Spirit always comes to assist us in our weakness and grants us the support we need. Let us, therefore, learn to invoke the Holy Spirit more often! “So, Father, how is the Holy Spirit invoked? I

know how to pray to the Father with the Our Father. I know how to pray to Mary with the Hail Mary. I know how to pray to Jesus with the Prayer to His Holy Wounds. But to the Spirit... What is the prayer to the Holy Spirit?" The prayer to the Holy Spirit is spontaneous: it needs to come from your heart. In difficult moments, you need to ask: "Holy Spirit, come". The key word is this: *come*. Come. But you need to say it yourself in your own words. Come, because I find myself in difficulty. Come, because I am in the dark. Come, because I don't know what to do. Come, because I am about to fall. Come. Come. This is the Holy Spirit's word – how to call upon the Spirit. Let us learn to invoke the Holy Spirit often. We can do this with simple words at various moments during the day. And we can carry with us, perhaps inside the Gospel in our pocket, the beautiful prayer the Church recites on Pentecost: "Come,

come Holy Spirit, / And from your
celestial home / Shed a ray of light
divine! / Come, come, Father of the
poor! / Come, Source of all our store!
/ Come, within our bosoms shine! /
You, of comforters the best; / You the
soul's most welcome Guest; / Sweet
refreshment... Come..." And so it
continues, it is a very beautiful
prayer. But only if you have the
prayer – or if you cannot find it, the
gist of the prayer is "Come", as the
Madonna and the Apostles prayed
during the days when Christ
ascended into Heaven. They were
alone in the Upper Room begging:
Come, that the Spirit would come. It
would be good for us to pray it often.
Come, Holy Spirit. And with the
presence of the Spirit, we will protect
our freedom. We are free, free
Christians, not attached to the past in
the bad sense of the word, not
chained to practices. Christian
freedom is what makes us grow. This
prayer will help us walk in the Spirit,

in freedom and in joy because when the Holy Spirit comes, joy, true joy comes. May the Lord bless you. Thank you.

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