



Send forth your Spirit! And **ALL** were filled with the Holy Spirit.

+ Rome, May 26, 2006

Dear Sisters,

“And all were filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts. 2:4) The picture which, at a first glance, might strike us as a little bit strange, shows just that moment. The apostles form a semicircle, open for the “world,” symbolically represented by the mandala-looking circle with the inscribed words: “ET REPLETI SUNT OMNES SPIRITU SANCTO.” The picture radiates calmness and at the same time agitation. We can recognize expectation and fulfilment, a prayerful stillness and a joyful enthusiasm; we see an inner unity of the group and at the same time a readiness to set out. “All were filled

with the Holy Spirit,” not as an anonymous crowd, but, as the tongues of fire show, each one individually. The Spirit of God descends on each person, to each one is given a very specific spiritual gift (cf. 1 Cor 12:4-11). To each one! The apostles and the Jewish-Christians had to enter into a long learning process in order to accept “that the Holy Spirit has been poured out on the Gentiles also.” (cf. Acts 10:45) Are we not still involved in that learning process as we strive to free ourselves from our prejudicial classifications of people and events? The Spirit does not exclude anyone. However, he does not impose himself upon us. But when he finds a longing and open heart he penetrates it. The above picture shows this openness of the persons. They are ready to receive the Holy Spirit, the innermost mystery of God.

“Send forth Your Spirit and all shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth.” We still pray this more than 2500-year-old intercession even today. But do we really believe that the Holy Spirit will renew the face of the earth? And – what face is meant here? Recently I read a story which explains this with a surprisingly simple comparison. “A young man comes to a Rabbi asking him: ‘What is faith?’ The Rabbi leads him to a window and asks: ‘What do you see?’ The young man answers: ‘People, houses, trees ...’ Then the Rabbi goes with him to a mirror asking: ‘What do you see now?’ The young man answers: ‘Now I see myself.’ ‘Look,’ says the Rabbi, ‘when you accept your life as it is, without adding some ‘silver,’ then you perceive the whole world and its Creator. But when the clear window is not enough for you and you add only a little bit of silver then you see only yourself.”

That is the point of Pentecost: to receive the gift to “look through,” to look away from our own “mirror image,” until we see God’s face and perceive people and all of creation in him. We look with new eyes, namely, with the eyes of God. And then we can no longer “remain seated,” but we must rise and set out. Pentecost is the Feast of strong inner dynamic power; it “is the Feast of opening our closed doors, and setting out. All who think that they have done their part in the ‘construction’ of the world will stay behind. The same Spirit warms and refreshes, whirls around and reunites, smashes what is outdated and gives a new beginning. The Spirit of God is always active. However, it is not up to us to direct the Spirit; on the contrary, we are called to follow his inspiration. We cannot ‘hire’ the Spirit as our servant, but he will make demands on us. He is active in history and leads creation to its destination. When our world needs consolidation and protection, stillness and healing, then the Spirit comes to us with his consoling gifts. But when our world needs a fresh impetus to set out and to move on, then he awakens the new and unknown and turns our routine, in which we felt secure, upside down” (Fr. W. Schumacher)

The question is: Which spirit do we long for – individually and as a community? Do we dare to ask for that Spirit who will renew the face of the earth – myself/us? Or do we prefer that everything remains as it is? However, that would not be a characteristic of a Spirit-filled community.

The Holy Spirit is the inner force of Jesus. He “renews creation from inside and does not let anything as it had been. One who believes in the power of this Spirit and implores his coming must know that he/she implores the divine disturbance.” (Schott Mass book) Mother Pauline knew that. During her retreat in 1850 she prayed: “Just as the apostles in prayer and recollection awaited the Holy Spirit so do we also. May he treat us as he did them. From timid, poor fishermen who had locked the doors for fear of the Jews, they were changed into fearless men, Apostles, who carried the Gospel into the whole world. Lord, do in like manner for us. You can transform our weakness into strength. You can do all, you can also do this.”

Let us not let a day pass without having firmly implored for his great gift: ‘Send forth Your Spirit and all shall be created, and You shall renew the face of the earth.’ Let us ask especially for the Spirit of open eyes, open ears, open hearts; for the Spirit who will help us to understand the thinking and speaking, the questions and fears of people today. When we allow ourselves to be directed by the Holy Spirit we will understand how we shall respond in the spirit of the charism of Mother Pauline. I think that just now, as we prepare for and then have the Provincial Chapters and the General Chapter this question will be an essential one. May God give us the Spirit to “look through,” to look beyond ourselves and to be ready to set out, to launch into the deep, so that we may collaborate in renewing the face of the earth. The readiness to change one’s attitudes and to make a new start was very characteristic of Mother Pauline. The source and foundation of this readiness can be traced to her disregard of self. This attitude can only develop when a person is intent on moving beyond an idea to its realization; when he/she wishes to respond God’s call, which may be an invitation to withdraw from given situations, from ways to which one is accustomed, from security, in order to come closer to God who is Life.” (Charism Study of the German Province, 1974) God does not want us to be people who are immature and who just adapt to every circumstance. He wants us to be “partners” in his never-ending act of creation. We may trust that the Spirit of God will give us the mature wisdom we need time and again, so that we may adequately respond to today’s challenges.

It is my wish that each one of us, and our community as a whole, is fully open for the coming of the Holy Spirit, so that he can unfold his action in us and help us to “look through,” to recognize what the Lord is expecting from us today.

Some Information:

- I want to thank you very much for all the material and spiritual gifts you sent for Easter and for my feastday. May the Lord reward you abundantly for all.
- At the holy places in Lourdes you were all very close to me. In a special way I thanked God that we are privileged to be called *Daughters* of the one who revealed herself on March 25, 1858 as the *Immaculate Conception*.
- On June 11 four Sisters will begin their tertianship here in Rome. It will continue in Paderborn from July 4-16. I want to ask you, dear Sisters, to accompany these Sisters with your prayers during this important time in their lives.
- Seven Sisters from the USA will participate in the renewal course from June 21 to July 19 in Paderborn and Rome. - An international meeting of 12 younger Sisters will take place here in Rome from July 21-31. It will continue in Paderborn from August 1-6. Both groups I recommend also to your prayers, dear Sisters.

With hearty Pentecost greetings, also from our Sisters of the Generalate community, I remain

your grateful

Sr. Adalberta

On May 22 Sister Cecilia and I were able to participate in the Audience of the Holy Father. In his speech he expressed very clearly the essentials of the Consecrated Life. I send you an excerpt, published by the International News Agency **ZENIT**. At present, the complete text is published only in Italian and Spanish.

Pope Urges New Efforts in Consecrated Life

Warns of "Snare of Mediocrity, Gentrification and Consumeristic Mentality"

Benedict XVI says that "courageous choices are needed, at the personal and community level," to rediscover and to show the beauty of following Christ in a consecrated life.

The Pope posed this challenge when receiving in audience the general superiors of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life.

In his address Monday in Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father analyzed some of the key challenges facing consecrated life, which is losing numbers in some parts of the world.

The meeting also gave the Bishop of Rome the opportunity to express his affection for the consecrated persons, in particular, "all those who are in difficulty, the elderly and the sick, those who are going through moments of crisis and loneliness, those who suffer and feel lost," and those who knock at the door of religious families to "give themselves to Jesus Christ, in the radicalness of the Gospel."

Consecrated persons today have the "task to be witnesses of the transfiguring presence of God in an ever more disoriented and confused world, a world in which shades have replaced exceedingly clear and striking colors," Benedict XVI clarified.

In this connection, the Pope said that "in the last years consecrated life has again been understood with a more evangelical, more ecclesial and more apostolic spirit. But we cannot ignore that some concrete choices have not offered the world the authentic and vivifying face of Christ."

Secularized culture

In fact, "secularized culture has penetrated the mind and heart of not a few consecrated persons, who see in it a form of access to modernity and approach to the contemporary world," the Holy Father noted.

The consequence, the Pontiff indicated, "is that along with an undoubtedly generous impulse, able to give witness and to commit itself totally, consecrated life is experiencing today the snare of mediocrity, gentrification and the consumeristic mentality."

"Courageous choices are needed at the personal and community level, which imprint a new discipline on the life of consecrated persons and lead them to rediscover the integral dimension of the following of Christ," the Holy Father stressed.

Benedict XVI clarified that "to belong to the Lord" is "the mission of the men and women who have opted to follow the chaste, poor and obedient Christ, so that the world will believe and be saved."

Therefore, the Pontiff counseled them to be nourished daily with prayer -- "intimate conversation of the consecrated soul with the divine Bridegroom" -- and with "daily participation in the ineffable mystery of the divine Eucharist, in which the risen Christ makes himself constantly present in the reality of his flesh."

Regarding the vow of chastity made by religious, the Pope explained that "it cannot be framed in the logic of this world." In a reference to Matthew 19:11-12, he said that "it is the most 'unreasonable' Christian paradox and not everyone can understand it and live it."

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