



# The Holy See

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## VIGIL OF PENTECOST

### **HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS**

*St Peter's Square*

*Saturday, 8 June 2019*

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#### **[Multimedia]**

This evening too — vigil of the final day of the Easter Season, the Feast of Pentecost — Jesus is in our midst and proclaims aloud: “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (Jn 7:37-38).

It is the Holy Spirit’s “rivers of living water”, which flow from Jesus’ heart, from his side pierced by the sword (cf. Jn 19:37), and which cleanse and make fruitful the Church, the mystical bride represented by Mary, the new Eve, at the foot of the Cross.

The Holy Spirit flows from the merciful heart of the Risen Jesus, fills our heart with mercy, in “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over” (cf. Lk 6:38), and transforms us into the Church-heart of mercy, that is, into an “open-hearted mother” for everyone! How I would like the people of Rome to recognize the Church, recognize *us* for this *abundance* of mercy — not for other things — for this *abundance* of humanity and of tenderness, of which there is so much need! One would feel at home, the ‘maternal home’ where one is always welcome and where one can always return. One would always feel welcome, listened to, clearly understood, helped to take a step forward in the direction of the Kingdom of God.... As a mother knows how to do, even with her grown children.

This thought of the motherhood of the Church reminds me that 75 years ago, on 11 June 1944, Pope Pius XII made a special act of thanksgiving and supplication to the Virgin, for her protection of the city of Rome. He did so in the Church of Saint Ignatius, where the venerated image of Our Lady of Divine Love had been taken. Divine Love is the Holy Spirit, which pours out of the Heart of

Christ. He is the “spiritual rock” that accompanies the People of God in the desert, so that by drawing the living water they may quench their thirst along the way (cf. 1 Cor 10:4). In the burning bush that does not extinguish, the image of Mary, Virgin and Mother, there is the Risen Christ who speaks to us, conveys to us the fire of the Holy Spirit, dispatches us among the people to hear their cry, invites us to open the passage to paths of freedom that lead to God’s promised land.

We know this. Today too, as in all times, there are those who seek to build “a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens” (cf. Gen 11:4). They are human plans, even *our* plans, made in service to an ever greater ‘I’, toward a heaven where there is no more room for God. God lets us be for a little while, so that we may experience the extent of evil and sorrow that we are capable of reaching without him.... But the Spirit of Christ, Lord of history, cannot wait to cast everything off, to enable us to begin again! We are always a little ‘narrow’ of mind and of heart; left to ourselves we end up losing sight of the horizon; we end up convincing ourselves that we have understood everything, that we have taken all the variables into account, have foreseen *what* will happen and *how* it will happen.... They are all our constructs that give us the illusion of touching heaven. Instead the Spirit bursts into the world from on High, from the heart of God, where the Son was begotten, and makes all things new.

What are we celebrating today, all together, in Rome, this city of ours? We are celebrating the primacy of the Spirit, who silences us before the unpredictability of God’s plan, and then makes us jump for joy: ‘So *this* is what God had in his heart for us!’: this journey of the Church, this passage, this Exodus, this arrival in the promised land, the Jerusalem-city with its gates always open to everyone, where mankind’s various languages are arranged in the harmony of the Spirit, because the Spirit is harmony.

And if we have labour pains, we understand that our groan, that of the people who live in this city and the groan of the whole of creation are none other than the very groan of the Spirit: it is the birth of the new world. God is the Father and mother; God is the midwife; God is the groan; God is the begotten Son in the world and in us, the Church; we are at the service of this birth. Not at the service of ourselves, not at the service of our ambitions, of many dreams of power, no: at the service of God’s deeds, of these wonders that God works.

“If pride and presumed moral superiority do not dull our hearing, we will realize that beneath the cry of many people there is not but an authentic groan of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who spurs us once again not to settle, to seek to set out on the journey anew; it is the Spirit who will save us from all diocesan ‘re-arrangement’” (*Address to the Diocesan Conference*, 9 May 2019). The danger is this desire to confuse the newness of the Spirit with a method of ‘re-arranging’ everything. No, this is not the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God disrupts everything and helps us begin not from scratch but from a new path.

Thus let us allow the Spirit to take us by the hand and lead us into the heart of the city in order to

hear its cry, its groan. God tells Moses that this hidden cry of the People has reached him. He has heard it, has seen the oppression and suffering.... And he decided to intervene by sending Moses to evoke and nourish the Israelites' dream of freedom and to reveal to them that this dream is his very will: to make of Israel a free People, *his* People, bound to him by a covenant of love, called to witness to the Lord's faithfulness before all peoples.

But in order for Moses to fulfil his mission, God wants him instead to '*descend*' with Him among the Israelites. Moses' heart must become like God's, attentive and sensitive to the suffering and dreams of mankind, to their hidden cry when they raise their hands toward heaven, because they no longer have a hold on the earth. It is the groan of the Spirit, and Moses must listen, not with his ears but with his heart. Today he asks us Christians to learn how to listen with our heart. And the Teacher of this listening is the Spirit. To open our heart so he may teach us how to listen with the heart. To open it.

In order to hear the cry of the city of Rome, we too need the Lord to take us by the hand and help us '*descend*', to descend from our positions, to go down among the brothers and sisters who inhabit our city, in order to listen to their need of salvation, the cry that reaches him, and that we oftentimes do not hear. It is not a matter of explaining intellectual, ideological things. It makes me weep when I see a Church that thinks she is faithful to the Lord, that she is keeping abreast when she seeks purely functional paths, paths that do not come from the Spirit of God. This Church does not know how to descend, and if she does not descend it is not the Spirit who commands. It is a matter of opening eyes and ears, but especially the heart, to listen with the heart. Then we will truly set out on the journey. Then we will feel within us the fire of Pentecost, which spurs us to cry out to the men and women of this city that their slavery has ended, and that Christ is the way that leads to the city of Heaven. It takes faith for this, brothers and sisters. Today let us ask for the gift of faith in order to take this path.