



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 29 May 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Catecheses on the Acts of the Apostles

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today we begin a series of catecheses through the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. This biblical book, written by Saint Luke the Evangelist, speaks to us about the *journey* — of a journey: but what journey? Of the journey — *of the Gospel in the world*, and it shows us the marvellous bond between the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, who inaugurates the time of evangelization. The protagonists of the Acts are in fact a lively and effective “pair”: the Word and the Spirit.

God “sends forth his command to the earth”, says the Psalm (147:15). The Word of God runs swiftly; it is dynamic; it irrigates all terrain onto which it falls. And what is its strength? Saint Luke tells us that human words become effective not thanks to rhetoric, which is the art of fine speech, but thanks to the Holy Spirit, who is God’s *dýnamis*, God’s dynamic, his force, who has the power to purify the word, to render it a bearer of life. For example, in the Bible there are histories, human words; but what is the difference between the Bible and a history book? That the words of the Bible are taken by the Holy Spirit who gives a very powerful impulse, a different force, and helps us so that this word may be the seed of holiness, the seed of life, that it be effective. When the Spirit visits the human word it becomes dynamic, like “dynamite”, that is, capable of kindling hearts and of shattering schemes, resistance and walls of division, opening new paths and expanding the borders of the People of God. And we will see this in the course of these catecheses, in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles.

The One who gives vibrant resonance and decisiveness to our human word — so fragile and even capable of lying and of shirking one’s own responsibilities — is the Holy Spirit alone, through whom the Son of God was begotten; the Spirit who anointed him and supported him in the mission; the Spirit thanks to whom he chose his Apostles and who guaranteed perseverance and fruitfulness to their proclamation, as he guarantees to our proclamation even today.

The Gospel concludes with the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, and the narrative plot of the Acts of the Apostles begins precisely here, from the great abundance of the Risen One's life which permeates his Church. Saint Luke says that Jesus "presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). The Risen One, the Risen Jesus makes the most human gestures, such as sharing a meal with his own and he invites them to live in confident expectation of the fulfilment of the promise of the Father: "you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (1:5).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit, in fact, is the experience that allows us to enter into personal communion with God and to participate in his universal salvific will, acquiring the endowment of *parrhesia*, courage, which is the capacity to pronounce a word "as children of God", not just as men, but as children of God: a clear, free, effective word, full of love for Christ and for brothers and sisters.

Thus, there is no need to struggle to earn or deserve God's gift. Everything is given *freely* and *in good time*. The Lord gives everything freely. Salvation is not bought; one does not pay: it is a freely given gift. Before the fret to know in advance the time in which the events he announced will take place, Jesus responds to his own: "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (1:7-8).

The Risen One invites his own not to live the present with anxiety, but to make a covenant with time, to be able to await the unfolding of a sacred history that is not interrupted but that advances, always moves forward; to be able to await the "steps" of God, Lord of time and space. The Risen One invites his own not to "fabricate" the mission themselves, but to wait for the Father to dynamize their hearts with his Spirit, so as to be able to engage in a missionary witness capable of shining from Jerusalem to Samaria and to transcend the confines of Israel in order to reach the world's peripheries.

The Apostles experience that expectation together; they live it as the Lord's family, in the Upper Room, or Cenacle, the walls of which still bear witness to the gift by which Jesus consigned himself to his own in the Eucharist. And how do they await the power, the *dýnamis* of God? By praying with perseverance, as if they were not many but *one*. By praying in unity and with perseverance. Indeed, it is with prayer that isolation, temptation, suspicion are defeated and the heart opens to communion. The presence of the women and of Mary, Jesus' mother, intensifies this experience: they were the first to learn from the Teacher how to witness to the faithfulness of love and the power of the communion that conquers all fear.

Let us too ask the Lord for the patience to await his steps, to not wish to "fabricate" his work ourselves and to remain docile by praying, invoking the Spirit and cultivating the art of ecclesial

communion.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Canada and the United States of America. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

I offer a particular thought to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*.

Tomorrow we will celebrate the Ascension of the Lord Jesus into Heaven. As to the Apostles, may the Lord repeat to us too, today: "I will not leave you orphans; I will be with you all days until the end" (cf. Jn 14:17-18). If you are friends of Jesus, he will let you feel his presence in your life, and will never let you feel alone or abandoned.
