



# The Holy See

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JOHN PAUL II

## **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*Wednesday 7 June 2000*

*The glory of the Trinity present in living human beings*<sup>1</sup>. In this Jubilee year our catechesis has been reflecting with pleasure on the theme of the glorification of the Trinity. After contemplating the glory of the three divine Persons in creation, in history and in the mystery of Christ, our gaze now turns to man, to discern there the gleaming rays of God's action. "In his hand is the soul of every living thing, and the life breath of all mankind" (*Jb* 12: 10). Job's evocative words reveal the radical link that unites human beings to the "Lord who loves the living" (*Wis* 11: 26). Inscribed within the rational creature is an intimate relationship with the Creator, a fundamental bond established first of all by the gift of life. This gift is bestowed by the Trinity itself and includes two principal dimensions, as we will now seek to illustrate in the light of God's Word.<sup>2</sup> *The first fundamental dimension of the life we have been given is physical and historical, that "soul" (nefesh) and that "breath" (ruah) to which Job referred. The Father comes on the scene as the source of this gift at the very dawn of creation, when he solemnly proclaims: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gn 1: 26-27). With the Catechism of the Catholic Church we can draw this conclusion: "The divine image is present in every man. It shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the union of the divine Persons among themselves" (n. 1702). In this communion of love and in the human couple's procreative capacity there is a reflection of the Creator. In marriage man and woman continue God's creative work, sharing in his supreme fatherhood in the mystery which Paul invites us to contemplate when he exclaims: "one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (*Eph* 4: 6). The effective presence of God, whom the Christian pray to as *Father*, is already revealed at the beginning of every person's life and then expands throughout his days. This is attested by an extraordinarily beautiful strophe of Psalm 139, which can be rendered in the form closest to the original in this way: "Truly you have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb.... Nor was my frame unknown to you when I was made in secret, when I was fashioned in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance (*golmi*); in your book they are all written; my days were limited before one of them existed" (vv. 13, 15-16).<sup>3</sup> The *Son* is also present at the Father's side as we come into existence, he who took on our own flesh (cf. *Jn* 1: 14) to the point that he could be touched by our hands, be heard with our ears and be seen and looked upon with our eyes (cf. 1 *Jn* 1: 1). Indeed, Paul reminds us that "there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 *Cor* 8: 6). Every living creature, then, is also entrusted to the breath of God's *Spirit*, as the*

Psalmist sings: "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created" (*Ps* 104: 30). In the light of the New Testament, we can read these words as foretelling the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity. Therefore, at the source of our life there is a Trinitarian intervention of love and blessing.<sup>4</sup> As I have mentioned, there is another dimension to the life offered to the human creature. We can express it in three theological categories of the New Testament. First of all there is the *zoe aionios*, that is, "the eternal life" extolled by John (cf. 3: 15-16; 17: 2-3), to be understood as a sharing in the "divine life". Then there is the Pauline *kaine ktisis*, the "new creation" (cf. 2 *Cor* 5: 17; *Gal* 6: 15), produced by the Spirit who bursts into human creatureliness, transforming it and granting it a "new life" (cf. *Rom* 6: 4; *Col* 3: 9-10; *Eph* 4: 22-24). This is the paschal life: "for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 *Cor* 15: 22). Finally, there is the life of the children of God, the *hyiothesia* (cf. *Rom* 8: 15; *Gal* 4: 5), which expresses our communion of love with the Father, through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit: "The proof that you are sons is the fact that *God* has sent forth into our hearts the *Spirit* of his *Son* which cries out "Abba!" ("Father!"). You are no longer a slave but a son! And the fact that you are a son makes you an heir by God's design" (*Gal* 4: 6-7).

5. Through grace this transcendent life instilled in us opens us to the future, beyond the limits of our frailty as creatures. This is what Paul says in his Letter to the Romans, once again referring to the Trinity as the source of this paschal life: "If the *Spirit* of him who raised *Jesus* from the dead (that is, the *Father*) dwells in you, he who raised *Christ* from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his *Spirit* who dwells in you" (8: 11). "Eternal life is therefore the life of God himself and at the same time the life of the children of God. As they ponder this unexpected and inexpressible truth which comes to us from God in Christ, believers cannot fail to be filled with ever new wonder and unbounded gratitude (cf. 1 *Jn* 3: 1-2)... The dignity of this life is linked not only to its beginning, to the fact that it comes from God, but also to its final end, to its destiny of fellowship with God, in knowledge and love of him. In the light of this truth St Irenaeus qualifies and completes his praise of man: "the glory of God' is indeed, 'man, living man', but 'the life of man consists in the vision of God'" (*Evangeliium vitae*, n. 38; cf. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, IV, 20, 7). Let us end our reflection with the prayer of an Old Testament sage to the living God who loves life: "You love all things that exist, and have loathing for none of the things which you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it. How would anything have endured if you had not willed it? Or how would anything not called forth by you have been preserved? You spare all things, for they are yours, O Lord who loves the living. For your immortal Spirit is in all things" (*Wis* 11: 24-12: 1).\* \* \*I extend a special welcome to the *National Italian American Foundation*, as well as to the FADICA group: the *Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities*. Upon all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially those from England, Ireland and the United States of America, I invoke the abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit. © Copyright 2000 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana