Vatican
Vatican News



Pope Francis, walking with a cane, approaches his chair as he arrives in St. Peter's Square for his weekly general audience at the Vatican May 29, 2024. (CNS/Lola Gomez)



Justin McLellan

Vatican Correspondent

View Author Profile

jmclellan@ncronline.org
Follow on Twitter at @m/McLellan_Js



Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — May 29, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The social and political problems plaguing modern society can be resolved only by allowing the Holy Spirit to heal humanity's inner turmoil, Pope Francis said.

"Around us, we can say there is external chaos, social chaos, political chaos. We think of wars, we think of so many children who do not have enough to eat, so many social injustices. This is the external chaos," he said at his general audience in St. Peter's Square May 29.

"But," he said, "there is also internal chaos. Within each of us, we cannot heal the former if we do not begin to heal the latter."

Beginning a new series of audience talks, "The Spirit and the Bride," on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church, the bride of Christ in Christian theology, Francis asked Christians to turn their "inner confusion into clarity through the Holy Spirit."

"It is the power of God that does this," he said. "Let us open our hearts so that he may accomplish it."

Francis said that even in the first lines of the Bible, the Book of Genesis' account of God creating heaven and earth, "the Spirit of God appears to us here as the mysterious power that moves the world from its initial formless, deserted and gloomy state to its ordered and harmonious state."

"The Spirit creates harmony, harmony in life and in the world," he said, adding that the Holy Spirit is the one who moves creation from "chaos to cosmos, that is, from confusion to something beautiful and ordered."

And the New Testament recounts how the Spirit is present at key moments in the new creation, Francis said, such as when the dove descends over the Jordan during Jesus' baptism or when Jesus breathes on the disciples and instructs them to "receive the Holy Spirit" just as God breathed life into Adam.

But it was St. Paul who "introduces a new element in the relationship between the Spirit and creation" by identifying the cause of the suffering present in creation as being "the corruption and sin of humanity that has dragged (creation) into its alienation from God."

Advertisement

"This remains as true today as it was then," he said. "We see the havoc that humanity has made and continues to make of creation," especially on the part of those who have a "greater capacity to exploit its resources."

Francis extolled the model of St. Francis of Assisi, who "shows us a way out, to return to the harmony of the Spirit: the way of contemplation and of praise."

Humanity's calling on earth, the pope said, "is about putting the joy of contemplating before the joy of possessing," noting that "no one has rejoiced in creatures more than Francis of Assisi, who did not want to possess any of them."

After his speech, Francis spoke about the church's first celebration of World Children's Day, hosted in Rome May 25-26, and about meeting Ukrainian children who were injured in the war.

"War is always cruelty; these children must start to walk (with artificial legs), to move with artificial arms; they have lost their smile," he said. "It is awful, very sad, when a child loses his or her smile, let us pray for Ukrainian children."

The pope also asked for prayers for Palestine, Israel and Myanmar and other countries at war.

Francis also noted that May 29 is the feast of St. Paul VI, "an ardent pastor of love for Jesus and the church and for humanity," and encouraged people to read "Evangelii Nuntiandi," St. Paul VI's apostolic exhortation on evangelization in the modern world which he said "is still current."

Written after the 1974 Synod of Bishops on evangelization, the document elaborated on the role of all Christians, and not only members of the clergy, in sharing the Gospel.