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Pope Francis greets a child at the end of his weekly general audience Feb. 22, 2023, in the Vatican audience hall. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Vatican City — June 5, 2024
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Pope Francis announced that he is preparing a document on the Sacred Heart of Jesus to "illuminate the path of ecclesial renewal, but also to say something significant to a world that seems to have lost its heart."

The document is expected to be released in September, he said, and will be part of ongoing celebrations marking the 350th anniversary of the first apparition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. The celebrations began Dec. 27 and are scheduled to end June 27, 2025.

The pope made the announcement during his general audience in St. Peter's Square June 5. The Catholic Church traditionally dedicates the month of June to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the solemnity of the Sacred Heart will be celebrated June 7 this year.

The document will include reflections from "previous magisterial texts" and it will aim to "re-propose to the whole church this devotion laden with spiritual beauty. I believe it will do us much good to meditate on various aspects of the Lord's love," the pope said.

Meanwhile, in his main audience talk, Francis continued a new series on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church, particularly in how the Holy Spirit leads God's people to meet Jesus, the source of Christian hope.

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The Biblical name of the Holy Spirit is "ruach" in Hebrew, which means breath, wind or spirit, he said.

The image of wind expresses the power of the divine Spirit, he said, and Jesus highlighted its freedom to blow and go where it wants.

"The wind is the only thing that absolutely cannot be bridled, cannot be 'bottled up' or put in a box," he said. "To pretend to enclose the Holy Spirit in concepts, definitions, theses or treatises, as modern rationalism has sometimes attempted to do, is to lose it, nullify it or reduce it to the human spirit."

A similar temptation in the church is the attempt "to enclose the Holy Spirit in canons, institutions, definitions. The Spirit creates and animates institutions, but he himself cannot be 'institutionalized'" or turned into an object, the pope said.

The freedom Jesus offers with his Spirit is special, he said. It has nothing to do with the selfishness of being free to do what one wants, but it is "the freedom to freely do what God wants! Not freedom to do good or evil, but freedom to do good and do it freely, that is, by attraction, not compulsion. In other words, the freedom of children, not slaves."

True freedom is choosing to serve "in love and joy," he said. And it is "a commitment to grow in the truth revealed by Christ and to defend it before the world," he said in his greeting to Polish-speaking pilgrims.