

Church for All People, Catholic from its Beginning  
VATICAN CITY, 12 JUN 2011 (VIS) -

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At 9.30 a.m. today, the Feast of Pentecost, the Holy Father presided at Mass in the Vatican Basilica.

In his homily the Holy Father said that "the Spirit which created all things, and the Holy Spirit which Christ caused to descend from the Father upon the community of disciples, are one and the same. Creation and redemption are mutually intertwined and constitute a single mystery of love and salvation".

"The Holy Spirit", he went on, "is first and foremost the Spirit of creation; and so Pentecost is the feast of creation. For we Christians the world is the result of an act of love by God, Who made all things. ... Thus God is not the Absolute Other, indescribable and obscure, God reveals Himself, He has a face, God is reason, God is will, God is love, God is beauty".

Benedict XVI explained that "the Holy Spirit is the One Who enables us to recognise ourselves in Christ the Lord, and causes us to pronounce the Church's profession of faith: 'Jesus is Lord'". In this context, he also pointed out that "by reciting the Creed we enter into the mystery of the Pentecost. ... The Creed brings us together from all over the world. Through the Holy Spirit, it ensures we understand one another though speaking different languages. Through faith, hope and love, the new community of the Church of God is formed".

"The Holy Spirit animates the Church", the Pope said. "The Church is not the result of human will, of reflection, of man's abilities or his capacity for organisation. If this were the case she would have passed out of existence a long time ago, just as all human things pass. She is, rather, the Body of Christ animated by the Holy Spirit".

"The Church was catholic from the first moment of her existence. Her universality is not the result of the subsequent inclusion of different communities: from the first instant the Holy Spirit created her as the Church of all peoples. She embraces the entire world, crossing frontiers of race, class and nation, breaking down barriers and uniting mankind in the proclamation of the One and Triune God. From her beginnings, the Church was one, catholic and apostolic. This is her true nature and as such she must be recognised. She is holy, not thanks to any capacity of her members, but because God Himself, with His Spirit, continuously creates, purifies and sanctifies her".

Benedict XVI concluded by quoting from today's Gospel: "'the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord'. ... Today, at Pentecost, this phrase also includes us, because in the faith we can see Him, in the faith He comes among us and shows us His hands and side, and we too can rejoice. Thus we pray: Lord show Yourself. Give us the gift of Your presence that we might have the greatest gift: Your joy!"