
Pope at audience: “The Church is not a market or a political party”

“The Church is not a market; the Church is not a political party”, the Pope remarked in today’s general audience, livestreamed from the Library of the Apostolic Palace, devoted to the prayer of the nascent Church. “Listening to the apostles’ teaching; safeguarding mutual communion; the breaking of the bread, and prayer.” These are the “four essential characteristics of ecclesial life”, which the Pope reiterated throughout. “Everything in the Church that grows outside of these ‘coordinates’ lacks a foundation”, Francis said: *“Any situation needs to be evaluated in the light of these four coordinates. Whatever is not part of these coordinates lacks ecclesiality, it is not ecclesial. If this is lacking, the Holy Spirit is lacking, and if the Holy Spirit is lacking, we are a beautiful organization, humanitarian, doing good things, ...even an ecclesial party. But it is not the Church.”* “The Church does not grow with these things: it does not grow through proselytism, as any other company, it grows by attraction. And who provokes attraction? The Holy Spirit”, reiterates the Pope: “Let us never forget Benedict XVI’s words. If the Holy Spirit is lacking, who is the one who attracts [people] to Jesus, the Church is not there. There might be a beautiful friendship club, but not the Church, not synodality.” **“The Church’s first steps in the world were interspersed with prayer”**, Francis said in his opening remarks. “It is God who creates the Church, not the clamour of works”, he explained:

“The Church is not a market;

the Church is not a group of businesspeople who go forward with a new business. The Church is the work of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent to us to gather us together, the work of the Spirit in the Christian community, in the life of the community, in the Eucharist, in prayer... always. And everything that grows outside of these coordinates lacks a foundation, is like a house built upon sand.” “It is Jesus’ word that fills our efforts with meaning. It is in humility that we build the future of the world”, the Pope assures. **“At times – Francis added with unprepared remarks - I feel tremendous sadness** when I see a community that has good will, but takes the wrong road because it thinks that the Church is built up in meetings, as if it were a political party: the majority, the minority, what do they think about this, that and the other...’ this is like a Synod, the synodal path that we must take...’. I ask myself: “But where is the Holy Spirit there? Where is prayer? Where is communitarian love? Where is the Eucharist?”. *For Francis, without these four coordinates, “the Church becomes a human society, a political party – majority, minority – changes are made as if it were a company, according to majority or minority... But the Holy Spirit is not there.”* **“We must recapture this sense of adoration.** To adore, to adore God, to adore Jesus” the Pope concluded with unwritten remarks: “To adore. In silence. The prayer of adoration is that prayer that makes us recognize God as the beginning and the end of all of History. And this prayer is the living flame of the Spirit that gives strength to witness and to mission.” “In reading the Acts of the Apostles we then discover what a powerful driving force of evangelization the prayer gatherings can be, where those who participate actually experience Jesus’ presence and are touched by the Spirit”, Francis points out: “The members of the first community - although this always applies, even to us today – sensed that the narrative of the encounter with Jesus did not stop at the moment of the Ascension, but continued in their life.” In fact, the Spirit’s work in the Church is “making us remember Jesus. But not as a mnemonic exercise. Christians, walking on the paths of mission, remember Jesus while they make Him present once more; and from Him, from His Spirit, they receive the “push” to go, to proclaim, to serve.”

“God gives love, God asks for love”,

is the Holy Father’s synthesis: “This is the mystical root of the believer’s entire life. In prayer, the first Christians – and us as well, who come many centuries afterwards – we all live the same experience.

The Spirit inspires everything.”

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