



Vatican City, May 9, 2016.- Pope Francis says it is the Holy Spirit that moves the Church but for many Christians today, the Holy Spirit is a stranger. Speaking on Monday morning during Mass at the Casa Santa Marta the Pope urged believers to allow themselves to be propelled by the Holy Spirit whom, he said, shows us the way to freedom. He also had a special greeting for the Vincentian Sisters of Charity who work at the Casa Santa Marta and who are marking the feast day of their founder: St. Louise de Marillac.

Drawing inspiration from the reading of the day which recounts the dialogue between Paul and the first disciples in Ephesus, Pope Francis recalled that the disciples told Paul that they had “not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit”.

This is something, he said, that happens today as well as many who believe in Jesus do not know the Holy Spirit. Many, he said, say they have “learnt through Catechism” that the Holy Spirit is “in the Trinity” but they do not know anything more and they wonder what the Spirit does:

“The Holy Spirit is the one who moves the Church, he said, the one who works in the Church and in our hearts” making each Christian unique and yet, together with other Christians, a unit. The Holy Spirit, the Pope continued, opens the doors and invites us to bear witness to Jesus.

“At the beginning of Mass we heard the words: ‘you will receive the Holy Spirit and you will be my witnesses in the world’. The Holy Spirit is the one who moves us to praise God, to pray the Lord, the one who is within us and teaches us to see the Father and to call him ‘Father’. The Holy Spirit frees us from this ‘orphan-like’ condition which the spirit of the world wants to put us in” he said.

Pope Francis said the Holy Spirit is “the protagonist of the living Church” and he warned against the danger of not living up to this mission of the Holy Spirit thereby reducing faith to “morals and ethics”.

It is not enough, he said, to just respect the Commandments and do “nothing more”. Christian life, Francis reiterated, “is not just an ethical life: it is an encounter with Jesus Christ.” And it is thanks to the Holy Spirit that this encounter takes place:

“But we keep the Holy Spirit as a ‘luxury prisoner’ in our hearts: we do not allow the Spirit to push us forward, to move us. The Spirit does everything, knows everything, reminds us what Jesus said, can explain all about Jesus. There is only one thing the Holy Spirit can’t do: make us ‘parlour’ Christians (...) The Holy Spirit cannot make us ‘virtual’ Christians who are not virtuous. The Holy Spirit makes real Christians. The Spirit takes life as it is and prophetically reads the signs of the times pushing us forward (...), the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity,” he said.

Pope Francis urged all faithful this week to reflect on the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives and to ask ourselves whether we have the courage to go out into the world bearing witness to Jesus. And inviting us to prepare for the upcoming Feast of Pentecost, the Pope said we must think of the Holy Spirit who is within our hearts and ask for the grace of obedience and docility to the Spirit:

“This is what we must do this week: think of the Spirit and talk to Him”.

[This report is from Vatican Radio]