

Brief commentary on the "synodal diptych"



In the first part of the diptych we see **Christ, Crucified and Risen**, dressed in priestly garb. We have a **High Priest** who takes part in our weaknesses and who through the sacrifice of himself unites humanity with God the Father (cf. Heb 4:15; 9:12-14.26). Above Him there is the **hand of the Father** who welcomes Him into the heavenly sanctuary. Thanks to Jesus we know the works of the Father and we know that his hand is a generous hand that gives and that holds nothing back for himself. *"He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?"* (Rom, 8:32). In his giving himself to all humanity, Christ breaks down the **wall** that, in the temple, separated the chosen people from the pagans.

“For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh” (Eph 2:14). There is no longer any separation, and it is now possible for everyone to walk the **road** of new life.

Next to Christ, or rather - part of him, of his Body - is the **Mother of God**, the figure of the **Church** who gathers the water and blood that flow from the **pierced side** of her Son, the symbol of the sacraments. Inside the **chalice** there is a **dove**, the symbol of the **Spirit** who hovered over the Son of God in the baptismal waters and who now hovers over the sacraments. We are before the gift of the Holy Spirit who enables us to participate in the life of God himself, filial life, the life of communion. Mary-the Church, united with Christ, hands the chalice to the **centurion**, a "pagan" who in reality is the first believer, the first to have recognized the Son of God in the Crucified Christ. *“Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. The veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. When the centurion who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!””* (Mk 15:37-39). The **veil** of the sanctuary was torn with his death on the Cross, opening to all the possibility of meeting God (cf. Heb 10:19-20). Looking at the pierced side of Jesus, the centurion is reached by the Holy Spirit. In fact, no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:3). Behind him a **crowd** of people opens up. Thanks to his testimony, faith will reach them and they will be **clothed with Christ** (cf. Gal 3:27), indeed, woven into the Body of Christ, thanks to baptism, as "sons in the son" who receive divine life by drinking from the cup.

The **priestly stole** reminds us that by assuming human nature Christ has opened to all people the possibility of becoming sons and daughters and of living life as communion, as peace, as reconciliation. Through his death, by which he united us in His body of flesh (cf. Col 1:22), we can approach the Father with the freedom of children.

Thanks to this gift of the Son of God on the Cross and his return to the Father, the Holy Spirit can descend upon all humanity. The Church is called to manifest that God shows no partiality (cf. Acts 10:34), because Christ has broken down every wall.

The origin of **synodality** is here, in the **heart of Christ**.



The second part of the diptych places us before an everlasting **Pentecost** where, around a table, we find the **apostles** with **Peter** in the center and **Cornelius**, another centurion, with his family on his right.

From the **hand of God the Father** flow the **flames of the Holy Spirit**, enlightening everyone and giving them filial life so that they can live as children and therefore as brothers and sisters. Mutual understanding, collaboration, communion, and the unity of humanity are not only a horizontal reality, but a gift that comes from God the Father and that must be received. This gift is the love of God that has been revealed to us by the Pascha of Christ.

The center of the image is therefore the **Paschal Lamb** (cf. Rev 5:6), immolated, but alive, erect and **radically oriented to the Father**. His **wound** brings back all that we contemplated in the first image and continues to remind us that synodality is a gift that comes from the heart of Christ. Synodality is being in communion and walking together. In the light of the Spirit and in the power of the Son's Pascha, synodality orients us to the Father and enables us to discern His will.

On the table there is a **cover** with **various animals** through which Peter understands that no man is unholy or unclean (cf. Acts 10:28-29). Peter is experiencing a real conversion, provoked by the Spirit who spoke to him through the vision of the sheet with the animals (cf. Acts 10,11-15) and led him to meet Cornelius. Under the cross, Mary recognizes in the centurion - a pagan - the first believer. In the encounter with Cornelius - also a centurion-pagan - Peter too understands that those whom *he* called pagan *God* desires as his people. When Peter announces the kerygma, that is, the content of the first part of the diptych, the Holy Spirit is poured out on all those present (cf. Acts 10:37-44). This episode – preceding that "council" in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15) which constitutes a crucial reference point for a synodal Church - conveys to us the experience of the Spirit in which Peter and the early community recognize that they cannot set limits to sharing the faith.

Another figure we see emerging from the group is the **Canaanite** woman (cf. Mt 15:21-28), the one who, humbly asking for the grace of healing for her daughter, reminded the Lord that even little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table. Her presence at the table of the redeemed manifests how the Holy Spirit in the Church gathers humanity by giving all that is necessary so that we can live as redeemed.

By observing the **gazes**, we are able to grasp the presence of the Spirit in everyone. Everyone is enlightened by the Spirit; everyone becomes a temple of the Spirit. There are those who look upwards, because the Spirit teaches us to invoke "Abba, Father" (cf. Rom 8:15-16). Some look up to the Lamb, the symbol of God's love, poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5). Other gazes overlap, because those who have welcomed Peter's announcement are filled with the Holy Spirit. Still others look towards us.

The Spirit also descends upon all of us, as upon the Canaanite woman, and inserts us into an attitude of humility and of listening, thus making us pass from a religion that binds us with its rites, to faith in the love that God has for all and that frees us from all cultural and ethnic conditioning. We Christians also run the risk that faith as a new, communal/ecclesial life, will become a religion, i.e. a structure with prescriptions, doctrines and habits that we must observe in order to conform to what we think is "the religious ideal".

This "synodal" diptych is a call to overcome divisions and to place ourselves in dispose ourselves to the attitude, thanks to which, we can be one in listening to others; and all in listening to the Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of truth" (Jn 14:17). In this way we participate in the way God guides history, the way of the Paschal Lamb, that is, the way of the gift of self.

The entire "synodal" diptych is based on the **red-blue relationship**, that is, on the divine-humanity of Christ and the Church. Red indicates God, because it is the color of fire, warmth, light, and even blood - and therefore of the life that has its source in God. Blue points to man because man is the only creature that looks to the heavens, while all other creatures face the earth. There are different blues for different people, because each person is unique.