



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

COLLECTION OF PATRISTIC TEXTS FOR THE OPENING OF THE SYNOD'S WORK

[Proposed by Pope Francis]

*The Holy Spirit is the **protagonist** of the Church's life: the plan of salvation of the human family is fulfilled by the grace of the Spirit*

Whether we consider ancient times - the blessings of the patriarchs, the help of the Law, the figures, the prophecies, the deeds of war, the miracles performed by the righteous - or the things prepared in view of the Lord's coming in the flesh, (everything was accomplished) by the Spirit. Firstly, the Spirit was with the Lord's own flesh, becoming his inseparable anointing, as it is written: "On whom you have seen the Spirit descend and remain, this is my beloved Son"; and "Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit". Then, all of Christ's actions were carried out under the assistance of the Spirit. The Spirit was present when Christ was subjected to the temptations of the devil [...], while he performed miracles [...]. After his resurrection from the dead, he never left him again. In his desire to renew man and give him back the grace he had received through the breath of God and had lost, what did Christ mean when he breathed on his disciples? "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive, are forgiven them; whose sins you retain are retained". And isn't the setting in order of the Church clearly and undeniably carried out by the Spirit? In fact, he gave the Church - he says - " first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers; after them, miraculous powers; then gifts of healings, helpful acts, guidance, various kinds of tongues". This order is in line with the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit (Bas., *Spir.* 16, 39, 4-32).

- a. The Holy Spirit ignites a profound and varied dynamic in the ecclesial community: the **'tumult'** of Pentecost

But the coming of the Holy Spirit also takes place at the third hour, as we learn from Acts, because when the Pharisees mocked the disciples (who expressed themselves) in the manifold energy of tongues (ἐν τῇ ποικίλῃ τῶν γλωσσῶν ἐνεργείᾳ), Peter says that those who say these things are not drunk: it was indeed the third hour. (Bas. [?], *ascet.* 13: PG 31, 877, 24)

- b. *The Holy Spirit is the harmonic composer of salvation history: **harmony** does not mean a summation but rather the bond of communion between dissimilar parts*

But God, before existed any of the things we now see, as He was conceiving and was beginning to bring into being what did not yet exist, at the same time, conceived how the world had to be, and created the matter that harmonised with His idea. To the heavens he attributed its appropriated nature; to the form of the earth he gave the essence proper and due to it. He then gave form to fire, water and air, as he willed, and brought them into existence according to the reason being that each of the elements demanded. With an indissoluble bond

of concord, he united the whole world, made up of different parts, in a single communion and harmony, so that even the elements placed at the greatest distance from each other seemed united by affinity. (Bas., *hex.* 2,49-61)

- *The Church: a single harmony in many voices brought about by the Holy Spirit*

"The voice of nations among the mountains, like voice of many nations, voice of kings and nations gathered together" (Is 13:4). The voice of the many nations on the mountains is probably the Church. That's why it was chosen a flat mountain, so that it would have free space for the gathering of the crowds of those who ascend to the heights of the knowledge of God. That's why he sees on the flat mountain a great crowd of people from many places with one voice of faith. And the Holy Spirit says through the Prophet: "The voice of many nations on the mountains (on which the sign was erected) is like (that of) many nations. And the voice is unique, but it is similar to the many voices of the nations. Unique, therefore, according to the harmony (symphony) of faith, but similar to many voices because it was distributed in tongues of fire by the Holy Spirit over each of the Apostles who were about to sow the Gospel among the nations of the earth. (Bas. [?], *En. in Is.* 13, 259: PG 30, 573B)

- *The Holy Spirit is at the origin of harmony between the Churches: Basil to his brother bishops of the West*

Therefore, just as we consider for our own good, our mutual harmony and unity, so we urge you to share the sufferings due to the divisions, and not to separate each other because of our distance, but to embrace one another in harmony [symphony] in one body because we are united in the communion according to the spirit. (Bas., *ep.* 90, 1, 26-32)

c. *The Holy Spirit leads us by the hand and comforts us*

"Expect affliction upon affliction, and hope upon hope, yet a little while, yet a little" (Is 28:10). In this way, the Holy Spirit is able to comfort (lit.: ψυχαγωγεῖν = to lead by the hand, to encourage, to console) his children whom he nourishes with the promise of the future. After affliction, indeed, there is hope: the expected realities are within reach (Bas., *ep.* 140, 1, 34-38).

- *The consoling action of the Holy Spirit depicted by the innkeeper, to whom is entrusted the man who has run into robbers (cf. Lk 10, 25-37)*

Wherefore, we have need of God's dew, that we might not be burned up or become unfruitful; and that where we have an Accuser, we would also have the Advocate [*Paraclete*]. And so the Lord entrusted His human nature of the Holy Spirit. It had fallen in with robbers, but He had pity on it and bound its wounds, giving it also two royal denarii, that having received through the Spirit the image and inscription of the Father and the Son, we might make the denarius entrusted to us productive, thereby returning to the Lord the increase in denarii (Iren., *haer.* III, 17, 3).

- *He who guards us is the Holy Spirit*

When, therefore, the soul bears fruit worthy of the eternal barns (cf. Mt 3:12), (the Spirit) remains close by and (guards) and drives away the attacks of wild boars (cf. Ps 74:14). (Bas. [?], *En. on Is* 1:20: PG 30, 152C-153A)

- *The multiple paracletic work of the Holy Spirit*

If the Holy Spirit encounters a tax collector who has faith, he makes him an evangelist (cf. Mt 9:9); if he encounters a fisherman, he turns him into a theologian (cf. Mt 4:19); if he encounters a repentant persecutor, he transforms him into an apostle for the Gentiles, a proclaimer of the faith, a vessel of choice (cf. Acts 9:15). Through him, the weak become strong, the poor become rich, uneducated laymen (cf. Acts 4:13) become wiser than the wise. Paul was weak, but through the presence of the Spirit, his personal linen brought healing to those who received it (cf. Acts 19:12). And Peter himself had a weak body, but by the grace of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in him, the shadow that came out of his body chased away the illnesses of those who were weak (cf. Acts 5:15). Peter and John were poor, they had no silver or gold (cf. Acts 3:6), but they gave health more valuable than many gold coins. The lame man, after receiving gold from many, was still a beggar, but after receiving Peter's favour, he stopped begging, leaping like a deer and praising God. John didn't know the wisdom of the world, but by the power of the Spirit, he spoke words that no wisdom can look upon. The Spirit dwells in heaven, has filled the earth, is present everywhere and is not contained anywhere. The Spirit dwells entirely in each person and entirely within God. He performs the service of providing his gifts, but he doesn't play the role of a servant, on the contrary, he distributes his graces with his own authority: in fact, "he distributes", says Scripture, "his gifts at will to each individual" (1 Cor 12:11). He is sent according to the plan of redemption, but he acts with complete independence. Let us ask him to be present in our souls and not to

abandon us under any circumstances, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and power forever and ever. Amen. (Bas., *fid.* 3)

d. The Holy Spirit is the one who makes us Church

"Hear this, all nations, give ear, all inhabitants of the world, both the earthborn and the sons of men, rich one and needy one together" (Ps 49:2-3). For the one who, calling us from the most diverse places, brings about unity, makes us the Church (ὁ ἐκκλησιάζων) and summons all with the proclamation (τῷ κηρύγματι), is the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth (Jn 14:17), who gathers together all who are saved through the prophets and the apostles. Their sound went out to all the earth, and his words to the ends of the world their utterances (Ps 18:5): Hear this, all nations and all inhabitants of the world (Ps 48:2). This is also why the Church is made up of people from all walks of life, so that no one is excluded from benefiting (Bas., hom. in Ps. 48: PG 29, 433, 9-18).

Thus, the Spirit is truly the place of the saints. And the saint is, in turn, a place familiar to the Spirit, because he offers himself to dwell with God and is also called his temple (Bas., Spir. 26, 62, 22-24).

- Ingratitude and indocility grieve the Holy Spirit who dwells in us

Therefore, because the Spirit is in you - if it is true that he is completely in you - and because he instructs and guides us, who were blind, in choosing what is useful for us, you won't be harmed in your right and holy opinion of him. In fact, the height of disloyalty is to make the benefactor's benevolence an occasion for ingratitude (ἀφορμὴν ἀχαριστίας). "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit" (Eph 4:30). Listen to what Stephen says, offered as the first fruits of the martyrs, when he reproaches the people for disobedience and insubordination: "You," he says, "are always resisting the Holy Spirit". And Isaiah: "They have provoked the Holy Spirit, therefore, he turned to them en enmity". And in another passage: "The house of Jacob has angered the Spirit of the Lord". (Bas., *Spir.* 19: 50, 5-17)

- Empty words sadden the Holy Spirit

Question 23. When can we judge a conversation as chatter? Generally speaking, every word that does not contribute to the fulfilment of the Lord's will is useless. And the danger of such words is so great that, no matter how good whatever it is said can be, if it is not ordered to the edification of the faith (cf. Eph 4:29), the one who spoke, does not escape the danger

because that word is good, but grieves the Holy Spirit because what he says is not ordered to the edification. The Apostle taught us this clearly when he said: "No foul word should ever cross your lips, let your words be for the improvement of others, as occasion offers, and do good to your listeners" (Eph 4:29), and added: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, who has marked you with His seal" (Eph 4:30). Is it necessary to say what a great evil it is to grieve God's Holy Spirit? (Bas., *reg. brev.* 23: PG 31, 1098D-1100A)

"Remind them of this; and tell them in the name of God there must be no wrangling about words: all that this ever achieves is the destruction of those who are listening" (2 Tim 2:14)... "Also avoid these foolish and undisciplined speculation, understanding that they only give rise to quarrels" (2 Tim 2:23). You shouldn't have useless conversations from which you gain nothing. Indeed, even to speak or do good, without it being for the edification of the faith, is to grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Bas., *reg. mor.* 25, PG 31, 744B).

Since the Lord does not leave without judgement those who produce idle talk, and even strongly judges as lazy those who leave their talents untouched in inactivity, the Apostle passed on to us that even he who speaks a good word, if it does not provide for the edification of the faith, he thus grieves the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 4:30). Likewise, we are obliged to consider the judgement of him who unworthily eats and drinks. (Bas., *bapt.* I, 3: PG 31, 1577BC)

e. The Holy Spirit confirms us in the faith

"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made firm, and by the breath of his mouth all their host" (Ps 32:6). [...] Let us understand, then, that there are three: the Lord who commands, the Logos who creates, the Breath (the Spirit) who confirms. What is confirmation (ἡ στερέωσις) if not perfection (ἡ τελείωσις) in holiness, since "confirmation" means that which is constant, unchanging, firmly established in the good? Holiness does not exist without the Spirit (Bas., *Spir.* 16, 38, 37-42).