



**Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit
21 October 2024**

**HOMILY
His Eminence Card. Mario Grech
Secretary General of the Synod**

Dear brothers and sisters,

We have reached the final stretch of the work of our Synodal Assembly, which gathers the fruits of a long journey that began in October 2021. Right now the Gospel passage shows us the way for how to "gather" and Jesus invites us to beware of all covetousness, and this may concern not only material goods, but the good and beauty that Jesus is entrusting to us in this Synod.

Jesus' parable is inspired by a question that is asked of him. A man asks him to be the judge - this is the function that the rabbis of Jesus' time could have had - between him and his brother to 'divide' the inheritance. But Jesus does not respond positively to his interlocutor's question. This may seem strange to us. Is it not right to divide the inheritance between brothers? Is it not right for each to take his share and go his own way? Of course for us it is normal, it is what we are tempted to do, but not for Jesus. For him the ideal is not that the inheritance be divided, but that it be kept intact, with shared administration. Jesus refuses to divide, but invites us to seek communion, since he identifies greed and the pursuit of possession as the root of division. Jesus rejects all logic of partisanship and division in the search for communion among brothers and sisters. This is why he then tells the parable, so that everyone can realise the "foolishness" behind the desire to hoard in barns. The parable shows us how to prepare ourselves in these days to reap the fruits of our synodal journey and of our assembly, without dividing ourselves, but seeking communion.

Let us follow the parable. "There was once a rich man who had a good harvest". The parable begins with a positive fact: there is an abundant harvest to rejoice in. We too in these three years and in the two sessions of the Synodal Assembly can say that we have been able to discover "abundant fruits". We have rejoiced at the signs of vitality in each phase of the synodal journey, starting with the listening that particularly characterised the first phase and involved all our communities. Our journey has been rich in fruits: it has helped us to see the gifts that are flourishing in the people of God today, without hiding our frailties and wounds. But as disciples of the Risen Lord, we have been able to recognise that it is precisely in our weakness that God's strength is manifested (cf. 2 Cor 12:9).

Faced with this abundant harvest, the owner of the field wonders: "What shall I do, since I have nowhere to put my crops?". The owner wonders how to manage the fruits of his fields and realises that he has no suitable and sufficiently large storehouses. He is faced with a new situation; he discovers that he has wealth that he could not have foreseen and it seems to him that he does not have the means to accumulate it and store it safely. We too, faced with the abundant fruits of the synodal journey, might ask ourselves the same question: what to do now? What to do with the abundant fruits we have gathered over these years? Perhaps we too, like

the man in the parable, might realise that we do not have the proper means to guard the gifts we have discovered. Or perhaps, we see it, like the man in the parable, as the achievement of a goal: now there is nothing more to be done, we just have to enjoy the fruits we have received.

In fact, he thinks to himself, 'I will demolish my storehouses and build bigger ones and gather all my grain and goods there'. This is the solution of someone who feels fulfilled. His solution is: build bigger warehouses. Not only does he use an old, familiar solution, even if slightly modified - he had small storehouses, he builds bigger ones - but he reasons according to the logic of someone who feels fulfilled. You just have to build a bigger warehouse. He is someone who wants to live off his earnings. He does not think that perhaps, in order to make use of the goods he has at his disposal, it is necessary to continue working, to explore new solutions, to see how the field develops. For the man in the parable, the harvested fruit is the end point. He is partially right, but not totally. They are also the starting point. The human being dies when he feels he has arrived and feels fulfilled.

He says to himself: "My soul, you have plenty of good things laid by for many years to come; take things easy, eat, drink, have a good time". He does not think of investing, of broadening his view, of making his possessions fruitful, but simply of living off his earnings. He rejoices in his completeness! We too could run the risk of doing as this man did, of hoarding what we have collected, the gifts of God that we have discovered, without reinvesting them, without living them as gifts received that we must now give back to the Church and the world, of feeling we have arrived!

We too may be content, without looking for new ways for our harvest to multiply further; we too may risk remaining closed within our known boundaries, without continuing to enlarge the space of our tent, as the prophet Isaiah invited us to do: "Enlarge the space of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitation be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes." (Is 54:2). We too can run the risk of living off our earnings. But the understanding of truths and pastoral choices go on, consolidate with the years, develop with time, deepen with age.

But how can we avoid falling into the error of the man in the parable, so as not to try to live off our earnings? Dear brothers and sisters, to do this there is one thing to avoid and one path to take. First of all, we must heed the words of Jesus: "Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for a man's life is not made secure by what he owns, even when he has more than he needs". As we close the work of our Assembly and look to the path that lies ahead of us, we must keep ourselves from covetousness, from the desire to keep everything for ourselves, to possess, to hoard, to define, to close. We must overcome the temptation to believe that the fruits we have harvested are our work and our possession: we must receive everything as a gift from God.

And what is the way forward? We are celebrating the Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit. The way to take is that of the Spirit of God. In fact, only the Holy Spirit can enable us to remain open to the newness of God. The Holy Father already reminded us of this at the beginning of the synodal journey: "the Synod is not a parliament or an opinion poll; the Synod is an ecclesial event and its protagonist is the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit is not present, there will be no Synod" (*Address*, 9 October 2021). The man in the parable only listens to himself, speaks to himself. We, on the other hand - individually and in community, as in a continuous Pentecost - must "dialogue" with the Holy Spirit, allow ourselves to be enlightened by him, waiting for that "overflow" that is the sign of his intervention. If we only listen to ourselves, if we turn in on

ourselves, we will live off our earnings, without hope. Little by little, what we have gathered will begin to disappear, without being replaced by the new things that the Lord will continue to send us. If, on the other hand, we listen to the voice of the Spirit, then we will be able to identify new paths and "as pilgrims of hope let us continue to advance along the synodal path towards those who still await the proclamation of the Good News of salvation!" (IL 112). If we listen to the voice of the Spirit, the conclusion of this synodal assembly will not be the end of something, but a new beginning, so that "the Word of God may spread and be glorified" (2 Thess 3:1).

Dear brothers and sisters, with Mary, to whom we have entrusted the work of our Assembly from the very beginning, if we know how to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and live in the freedom of the Spirit, we will be able to sing to the Lord the hymn of praise that the prophet Isaiah points out to us: "this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Is 25:9; IL 112).