



# The Holy See

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## ORDINARY PUBLIC CONSISTORY FOR THE CREATION OF NEW CARDINALS

### *HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS*

*Saint Peter's Square  
Saturday, 30 September 2023*

#### **[Multimedia]**

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Thinking of this celebration and particularly of you, dear brothers, who would become Cardinals, a text from the Acts of the Apostles came to mind (cf. 2:1-11). It is a fundamental text: the story of Pentecost, the baptism of the Church... But my thoughts were really drawn to one detail: the expression spoken by the Jews who “were dwelling in Jerusalem” (v. 5). They said: We are “Parthians and Medes and Elamites” (v. 9) and so on. This long list of peoples made me think of the Cardinals, who thanks be to God, are from all parts of the world, from the most diverse nations. That is the reason I chose this biblical passage.

Meditating on this, I became aware of a kind of “surprise” hidden in this association of ideas, a surprise in which, with joy, I seemed to recognize the humor of the Holy Spirit, so to speak. Please excuse the expression.

What is this “surprise”? It consists in the fact that normally we pastors, when we read the account of Pentecost, identify ourselves with the Apostles. It is natural to do so. Instead, those “Parthians, Medes, Elamites” et cetera, associated in my mind with the Cardinals, do not belong to the group of disciples. They are outside the Upper Room; they are part of the “crowd” that “gathered” upon hearing the noise of the rushing wind (cf. v. 6). The Apostles were “all Galileans” (cf. v. 7), while the people who gathered were “from every nation under heaven” (v. 5), just like the Bishops and Cardinals of our time.

This kind of role reversal gives us pause for thought and, when we look closely, it reveals an

interesting perspective, which I would like to share with you. It is a matter of applying to ourselves – I will put myself first – the experience of those Jews who by a gift of God found themselves protagonists of the event of Pentecost, that is of the “baptism” by the Holy Spirit that gave birth to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. I would summarize the perspective in this way: *to rediscover with amazement the gift of having received the Gospel “in our own tongues” (v.11)*, as the Jews said. To think back with gratitude on the gift of *having been evangelized* and having been *drawn from various peoples* who, each in their own time received the Kerygma, the proclamation of the mystery of salvation, and in welcoming it, were baptized in the Holy Spirit and became part of the Church. Mother Church, who speaks all languages, is One and is Catholic.

This word from the Acts of the Apostles makes us reflect that, before being “apostles”, before being priests, Bishops, Cardinals, we are “Parthians, Medes, Elamites”, et cetera, et cetera. And this should awaken awe and gratitude in us for having received the grace of the Gospel among our respective peoples of origin. I think this is very important and not to be forgotten. Because there, in the history of our people, I would say in the “flesh” of our people, *the Holy Spirit has worked the wonder of communicating the mystery of Jesus Christ who died and rose again*. And this came to us “in our language”, from the lips and the gestures of our grandparents and our parents, of catechists, priests, and religious... Every one of us can remember concrete voices and faces. The faith is transmitted “in dialect”. Don’t forget this: the faith is transmitted in dialect, by mothers and grandmothers.

Indeed, we are evangelizers to the extent we cherish in our hearts the wonder and gratitude of having been evangelized, *even of being evangelized*, because this is really a gift always present, that must be continually renewed in our memories and in faith. Evangelizers who have been evangelized, not functionaries.

Brothers and sisters, dearest Cardinals, Pentecost – like the Baptism of each one of us – is not a thing of the past; it is a creative act that God continually renews. The Church – and each of her members - lives this ever-present mystery. She does not live “off of her name”, still less does she live off of an archeological patrimony, however precious and noble. The Church, and every baptized member, lives the today of God, through the action of the Holy Spirit. Even the act we are carrying out now makes sense if we live it from this perspective of faith. And today, in the light of the Word, we can grasp this reality: you new Cardinals have come from different parts of the world, and the same Spirit that made the evangelization of your peoples fruitful now renews in you your vocation and mission in and for the Church.

From this reflection, drawn from a fruitful “surprise”, I would simply like to draw a consequence for you, brother Cardinals, and for your College. I would like to express this with an image, that of the orchestra: the College of Cardinals is called to resemble a symphony orchestra, representing the harmony and synodality of the Church. I also say “synodality”, not only because we are on the eve of the first Assembly of the Synod that has precisely this theme, but also because it seems to me

that the metaphor of the orchestra can well illuminate the synodal character of the Church.

A symphony thrives on the skillful composition of the timbres of different instruments: each one makes its contribution, sometimes alone, sometimes united with someone else, sometimes with the whole ensemble. Diversity is necessary; it is indispensable. However, each sound must contribute to the common design. This is why mutual listening is essential: each musician must listen to the others. If one listens only to himself, however sublime his sound may be, it will not benefit the symphony; and the same would be the case if one section of the orchestra did not listen to the others, but played as if it were alone, as if it were the whole. In addition, the conductor of the orchestra is at the service of this kind of miracle that is each performance of a symphony.

He has to listen more than anyone else, and at the same time his job is to help each person and the whole orchestra develop the greatest creative fidelity: fidelity to the work being performed, but also creative, able to give a soul to the score, to make it resonate in the here and now in a unique way.

Dear brothers and sisters, it does us good to reflect upon ourselves as the image of the orchestra, in order to learn to be an ever more symphonic and synodal Church. I propose this especially to you, members of the College of Cardinals, in the consoling confidence that we have the Holy Spirit – he is the protagonist – as our master: the interior master of each one of us and the master of walking together. He creates variety and unity; He is harmony itself. Saint Basil was looking for a synthesis when he said: “*Ipse harmonia est*”, he is harmony itself. We entrust ourselves to his gentle and strong guidance, and to the gracious care of the Virgin Mary.