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BE FRUITFUL

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27).

At the basis of Christian anthropology is this fundamental text from Genesis which the liturgy gives us today to meditate on in the context of our European continental session on synodality. Together, listening to the Holy Spirit, we listen attentively to the word of God on the creation of man and woman *in the image of God*. Is not this biblical vision now offered to our faith a precious beacon for our debates and discernments?

Between God and the human being there is a resemblance, a kinship, an affinity that sets him apart from all other creatures on earth. This resemblance has historically been understood in relation to the spiritual nature of the human being, because at first sight the body seems far from the purely spiritual divine Being. Contemporary exegesis, however, highlights the relational dimension of the image of God in man, thus recovering the mediation of the body and its fundamental role in the life of the couple. If it is true that the spiritual dimension of man and woman includes a resemblance to God, it should be noted that the human being is created by God as male and female, for a spiritual and corporal

relationship of love between man and woman that makes them one flesh: "*Be fruitful and prolific, fill the earth and dominate it.*" The image of God in man therefore includes the couple and its fruitfulness. It is even the primary meaning of the image that founds man's lordship over creation, for it is by the power of love that makes them fruitful that man and woman multiply, fill the earth and dominate it. Would to God that this dominion were ecological and not predatory, as it unfortunately appears in our days as a consequence of sin.

In the light of Christ the Redeemer, the Word of God incarnate, this anthropology of the image of God as a couple acquires a prodigious extension in the figure of the New Adam and the New Eve, Christ and the Church, who bring God's plan for man and woman to its fulfillment. The human being created male and female, man and woman, was created in view of Christ and the Church, in view of the sacrament of marriage which blesses the couple to the point of making it sacramental, that is to say, a bearer of a greater love, that of Christ for his Bride the Church. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* teaches us that "authentic conjugal love is assumed in divine love" (GS 48, §2) and made fruitful by it in many ways that give glory to God. This is a great mystery, says St. Paul, thinking of Christ and the Church. Men and women must not ignore it, betray it or manipulate it selfishly. For the Love of God that marries human love confers on it a participation in its divine properties: unity, fecundity, indissolubility. This participation strengthens, purifies and sanctifies human love, multiplying its chances of happiness. Unfortunately, sinful man often shuns this grace and prefers his own autonomous choices which lead him astray from God's paths.

In today's gospel, Jesus condemns the Pharisees for their hypocrisy regarding God's commandment: Honor your father and your mother. The Pharisees practice an interpretation that allows them to disregard the word of God for their own selfish interests. The Lord takes exception to this mentality

that claims to obey God while acting contrary to His Word. This warning also concerns us and challenges us in our work to achieve a more synodal Church. Are we not sometimes tempted to interpret the Word of God in a way that is contrary to what it really says? May the Holy Spirit accompany us and guide us in our exchanges and discernments. We are here to help each other and to train ourselves to walk together illuminated by the Word of God and nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ. May our fraternity be true, may our work be fruitful and may our discernments give glory to God! Amen.