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The Martyrological Dimension of Petrine Primacy in the Teachings of Joseph Ratzinger - Benedict XVI

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Abstract: The author succinctly discusses the martyrological dimension of Petrine primacy on the basis of the teachings of Joseph Ratzinger - Benedict XVI. The paper presents the biblical foundation of the prophecy of St. Peter's death as a martyr made by the Risen Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, offering an analysis of the Greek text of John 21:18–19. In his further reflections, the author discusses the development of the term “witness” in its Greek and Christian understanding. Then he briefly addresses the significance of a martyr as defined by Christian theology, explaining the dimensions of red and white martyrdom. In the fourth and last part of the paper, martyrological elements of the primacy are presented, including references to a work by Cardinal Reginald Pole quoted by Joseph Ratzinger.

Keywords: Petrine primacy, martyrdom, testimony, imitation, cross, humility, responsibility

Martyrologiczny wymiar prymatu piotrowego w nauczaniu Josepha Ratzingera - Benedykta XVI

Streszczenie: Autor artykułu w sposób zwięzły omawia element martyrologiczny wymiaru prymatu Piotrowego w oparciu o nauczanie Josepha Ratzingera - Benedykta XVI. W swoim artykule ukazuje podstawę biblijną zapowiedzi męczeńskiej śmierci św. Piotra, które wypowiedział zmartwychwstały Jezus nad Jeziorem Tyberiadzkim, analizując tym samym grecki tekst J 21, 18-19. W dalszej refleksji autor omawia kształtowanie się terminu „świadek” w rozumieniu greckim jak i chrześcijańskim. Następnie krótko omawia znaczenie

męczennika w rozumieniu teologii chrześcijańskiej ukazując wymiar czerwony i biały męczeństwa. W ostatniej, czwartej części, ukazane zostają elementy martyrologicznego prymatu, w której następuje odwołanie do dzieła kardynała Reginalda Pola, na które powołuje się Joseph Ratzinger.

Słowa kluczowe: prymat Piotrowy, męczeństwo, świadectwo, naśladowanie, krzyż, pokora, odpowiedzialność.

Introduction

The concept of Petrine primacy incorporates many aspects that reveal the richness of the Petrine ministry and, at the same time, the dignity of the Petrine office in the modern world. In addition to such aspects as strengthening others in their faith and directing them towards God, supporting the doubters and being guarantor of unity and a moral authority, there is also a less-known element that is often overlooked, and yet remains essential: the martyrological dimension. In this respect, the ministry of the Vicar of Christ can be understood as shouldering the burden of witness in today's world—a world marked not only by a crisis of morality and ethics, but also by that of culture and identity.

This paper explores the martyrological dimension of the ministry of the Successor of Saint Peter by establishing its biblical basis, examining the development and understanding of the word “witness” in the Greek and Christian worlds and highlighting the three dimensions of the theology of martyrdom associated with the primacy of Peter. The author's main source of reference is Joseph Ratzinger's/Benedict XVI's academic and theological reflection on the subject.

1. The Biblical Basis of the Prophecy of Peter's Martyrdom (John 21:18–19)

A biblical foundation for our discussion of the martyrological dimension of Petrine primacy can be found in the words directed by Jesus to Simon, son of John (cf. John 21:15), as recounted by the author of the Fourth Gospel: *Amēn, amēn, legō soi, hote ēs neōteros, ezōnnyes seauton kai periepateis hopou ētheles; hotan de gērasēs, ekteneis tas cheiras sou, kai allos zōsei se kai oisei hopou ou theleis. Touto de eipen sēmainōn poiō thanatō doxasei ton Theon. Kai touto eipōn, legei autō, Akolouthei moi* (John 21:18–19)¹. The prophecy spoken by the Risen Jesus to and

¹ “‘Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go’. (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after

about Peter appears in the context of the pastoral tasks previously entrusted to the first² of the Twelve (cf. John 21:15–17). In the background, one can see the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd who “lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). The logion that predicts the future fate of Simon Peter contains a number of distinctive expressions that carry a symbolic meaning.

In the context of the entire Gospel of John, the expression *Amēn, amēn, legō*³ as used by Jesus signifies the importance of the words being spoken, “the authority of the speaker, the significance and definitiveness of the message”⁴. At this point, it is worth noting that Rabbi Ḥanin sees the word אמן (*amen*) as an acronym

this he said to him, ‘Follow me’” (John 21:18–19). The Greek text of the above passage is quoted for the purposes of a more detailed analysis in this paper.

² Only the evangelist Matthew places the ordinal numeral *prōtos* before Simon’s name in his list of the Twelve (cf. Matthew 10:2), emphasizing Simon’s prominent role among the Twelve and among Jesus’s three closest disciples. It is also important to note that this is the first instance in which the disciples are referred to using the noun *apostolos* (Hebrew *shalīah*), which can be translated as “envoy” or “messenger” (and also as “apostle”). This term is sometimes used to describe a person who is sent out on someone else’s behalf (the noun occurs only once in Matthew, twice in Mark, six times in Luke, twenty-eight times in Acts and once in John). The verb form *apostellō* means “to send out”, “to send off”; it may also be translated as “to put in the sickle”. Joachim Gnilka notes that in the case of Mark and Matthew, the word “apostle” refers to the role which they are performing at Jesus’s behest, whereas Luke gives the word a deeper meaning by virtue of which it becomes a technical term. See J. Gnilka, *Piotr i Rzym. Obraz Piotra w pierwszych dwu wiekach*, trans. W. Szymona, Kraków 2002, p. 50. Joseph Ratzinger points out that the word “apostle” postdates the expression “the Twelve”, since it originated after the events of the Pentecost. See J. Ratzinger, *Głosiciele Słowa i służby Waszej radości. Teologia i duchowość sakramentu święceń* (Joseph Ratzinger *Opera Omnia* [hereinafter: JROO], 12), ed. K. Gózdź and M. Górecka, trans. M. Górecka and M. Rodkiewicz, Lublin 2012, p. 218; J. Gnilka, op. cit., p. 94. The earliest text in which the word *apostolos* can be found is the First Epistle to the Corinthians (15:7), where Paul refers to the witnesses of the Risen One. As can be seen in the Gospel of Luke, the term *apostolos* comes from Jesus. A similar observation can be made with respect to the Gospel of Mark, the difference being that the word *apostolos* is preceded by the adverb *kai*, which can be translated as “too” or “also”.

³ The expression *Amēn, amēn, legō soi/hymīn* used by Jesus appears as many as 25 times in the Fourth Gospel. The addressees can be categorized as individuals (five occurrences) and groups (twenty occurrences). In the former case, the phrase appears in the following verses: 3:3, 5, 11; 13:38. In the latter case, the phrase can be found in the following verses: 1:51, 5:19, 24, 25; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20, 21; 14:12; 16:20, 23. Furthermore, it can be noted that the phrase is one of a number of distinctive expressions characteristic of the Gospel of John. See E. Ruckstuhl, *Die literarische Einheit des Johannesevangeliums. Der gegenwärtige Stand der einschlägigen Forschungen* (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus, 5), Freiburg 1987, p. 204.

⁴ S. Mędała, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 1-12. Wstęp. Przekład z oryginału. Komentarz* (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament [hereinafter: NKB], 4/1), Częstochowa 2010, p. 336; see also F. Gryglewicz, *Przemówienie w Kafarnaum*, in: *Egzegeza Ewangelii św. Jana. Kluczowe teksty i tematy teologiczne*, Lublin² 1992, p. 42. For a broader discussion of the meaning of the word “amen”, see V. Hasler, *Amen. Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Einführungsformel der Herrenworte “Wahrlich ich sage euch”*, Zürich 1969; K. Berger, *Die Amen-Worte Jesu. Eine Untersuchung zum Problem der Legitimation in apokalyptischer Rede* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, 39), Berlin 1970; H. Schlier, *amēn*, in: *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, ed. G. Kittel, Stuttgart 1966, pp. 339–342.

of the words “God, faithful King” (*El Melekh ne’eman*)⁵. One may also notice that “this adverb is derived from the Hebrew root that conveys the idea of permanence, soundness, certainty (...). To say ‘Amen’ is to pronounce that one believes what one has just said to be true, thus confirming a proposal or supporting a plea”⁶. In Hebrew, the root *mn* is common to the words “amen” and “to believe,” but it may also embrace other meanings. In this context, Joseph Ratzinger points to such meanings as “truth, firmness, firm ground, ground, and furthermore the meanings loyalty, to trust, entrust oneself, take one’s stand on something, believe in something; thus faith in God appears as a holding on to God through which man gains a firm hold for his life”⁷. In the Fourth Gospel, the word *amēn* is used by Jesus twice in order to strengthen his message and highlight the importance of that message to the story of salvation. This may serve to add credibility to the words being spoken and signify their authenticity, since they are uttered by the Truth of God: Jesus Christ.

Another word of interest is the verb *zōnnumi* (“to gird”), which is used twice in the passage in question. In the first instance, the word appears in the indicative in the past imperfect tense, therefore it is not clear whether the specific action had been completed or was still ongoing. In the second instance, the word appears in its future tense form *zōsei*; in this context, it is also worth noting that a noun can be derived from this verb: *hē zōnē* (“girdle”). Going back to chapter 21 verse 7, one may find the verb *diezōsato*, which only occurs twice in another place in John: during the washing of feet, when Jesus girded Himself (13:4–5). This gesture conveys the symbolic meaning of being willing to “lay down one’s life”⁸. The act of girding of which Jesus speaks in reference to Peter indicates that as a young man, Peter would walk his own path and act as he wished, which is described in the Gospel. “I will lay down my life for you” (John 13:37), says Peter to Jesus, but he does so without the proper judgment and understanding of the gravity of the words he is speaking, something that is characteristic of young people. This is why he later experiences denial and, through that experience, discovers the meaning of his words in the context of his fear and terror. As a result, he reflects upon his conduct and grows to take responsibility for his words. It is only after the events of the Passover, during Peter’s encounter with Jesus at the Sea of Galilee, that he can respond to Jesus’s love (Greek *agapaō*) in a mature way with his human love (Greek *fileo*), and is thus ready to carry out his task of becoming a good shepherd: one who will not run in the face of adversity, but rather remain willing to even lay down his life for his sheep. As can be seen in this passage, Peter’s words concerning his willingness to give his life for Jesus

⁵ *Talmud. Shabbat*, chapter 16, 119b, <https://www.sefaria.org/Shabbat.119b?lang=bi> [30.09.2020].

⁶ Ch. Thomas, *Amen*, in: *Słownik teologii biblijnej*, ed. X. Leon-Dufour, trans. K. Romaniuk, Poznań–Warsaw 1973, p. 46.

⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J.R. Foster, San Francisco 1990, p. 39; see also *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, Poznań 2002, section 1062.

⁸ S. Mędała, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 13-21. Wstęp. Przekład z oryginału. Komentarz* (NKB, 4/2), Częstochowa 2010, p. 55.

before the events of the Passover were not yet the words of a “true follower of Jesus. True martyrdom takes place when one follows the Crucified One; in other words, it manifests itself in the willingness to accept the Cross of Christ as one’s own redemption, which makes man capable of no longer glorying in his own cross”⁹.

Saint Thomas Aquinas makes the following observation about Peter: “But it was not granted to you that you suffer for me when young, but when you are old I will fulfill your desire because you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you”¹⁰. This implies that if Peter had laid down his life in his youth, he would not have sacrificed himself to the end. Such sacrifice only becomes possible through the life experience that gives one a mature and conscious outlook on the decisions one makes.

The act of girding can be seen as a voluntary decision to bind one’s will that manifests itself in the readiness to respond to and follow Jesus’s word. Conscious of the task set before him by Jesus, Peter does not shy away. On the contrary, he accepts it as a genuine witness to the events that transpired; he takes this task upon himself in absolute silence. Gerhard Ludwig Müller also makes an interesting observation about Peter: “You are no longer able to do as you wish. You belong to Me in your entirety, and I will put a girdle around your robe and ‘carry you where you do not wish to go’ (J 21:18). Only through death or the anticipation of death in the daily spiritual dying of the old Adam in us can we ‘glorify God’ (J 21:19)”¹¹. Thus, the daily glorification of God can only take place through what is expressed in Psalm 115, verse 1: “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory.”

Looking at chapter 21, verse 18, it is possible to distinguish the following structure that builds on opposing expressions:

young (18a) vs. old (18b);

girding oneself (18a) vs. being girded by another (18b); and

walking where one would (18a) vs. being carried by another (18b).

At the center of the verse, there is also the gesture of outstretched hands (18b). The Fathers of the Church saw this gesture as the fulfillment of the prophecy about Peter’s death as a martyr on the cross¹², head down¹³ at his own request. The oldest account of Peter’s death is the First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, dated

⁹ J. Gnilka, op. cit., p. 208.

¹⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 13-21*, trans. Fabian Larcher and James A. Weisheipl, CUA Press 2010, chapter 21, lecture 4, section 2629.

¹¹ G.L. Müller, *Der Papst. Sendung und Auftrag*, Freiburg 2017, pp. 358–359.

¹² *Księga Pontyfikatów. 1-96 (do roku 772)* (Źródła Myśli Teologicznej, 74), ed. M. Ożóg and H. Pietras, trans. P. Szewczyk, Kraków 2014, pp. 13*–14*.

¹³ *Dzieje Piotra Apostoła i Szymona*, trans. Z. Izydorczyk and M. Bielewicz, “Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne”, 16 (2003), pp. 101–150; see also Ambroży, *Śmierć św. Piotra*, trans. A. Bober, in: *Antologia patrystyczna* (Światła ekumeny), Kraków 1965, p. 168; Ambroży, *Listy. 70-77. 1*-15** (poza zbiorom) *akta synodu w Akwilei* (Biblioteka Ojców Kościoła), vol. 3, trans. P. Nowak, ed. J. Naumowicz, Kraków 2012, 75a.13.

around AD 96, in which the author writes of Peter's witness and his well-deserved place of glory¹⁴, although he does not explicitly state what kind of death it was.

Verse 19 contains a commentary by the author of the Fourth Gospel on the words of verse 18. It is known that Peter died a martyr's death in AD 64, the most probable date being—as indicated by the Italian archeologist Margherita Guarducci—October 13¹⁵, the anniversary of Nero's ascent to power. This means that the author of the Gospel of John, which was edited in its final form around AD 90, knew what kind of death Peter had died and therefore consciously added Jesus's words as a comment that foretold or authenticated the earlier prophecy about Peter. The first account that mentions the cause of Peter's death is Tertullian's *De praescriptione haereticorum* of around AD 211, in which the Early Christian author writes the following: “Here [the author is clearly referring to Rome—J.J.W.] Peter endured a passion like his Lord's”¹⁶ and thus, as noted by Benedict XVI during his general audience of May 9, 2012, became definitively united with Jesus Christ¹⁷.

Since the manner of Peter's death is known, it would be difficult not to relate it to what Jesus had said about His own death. The author of the Fourth Gospel recounts this in the earlier passages. When He was in Jerusalem before the events of the Passover, Jesus addressed the crowds for the last time (cf. John 12:20–36) by saying: “[...] and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’ He said this to show by what death he was to die” (John 12:32–33). The corresponding passage where the above prophecy is fulfilled can be found in the description of the encounter between Jesus and Pilate, where the Jews cried: “It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.’ This was to fulfil the word which Jesus had spoken to show by what death he was to die” (John 18:31–33).

In the first part of verse 19, Jesus notes that Peter would glorify God through his death: *poiō thanatō doxasei ton Theon* (John 21:19). Here, the verb *doxazō* is used in the active form of the future indicative. Once again, there are obvious similarities between Jesus's death and Peter's death, supported by Jesus's vine allegory in which He speaks of those who, by abiding in Him, bear much fruit, as does Jesus by abiding in the Father: *en toutō edoxasthē ho Patēr mou, hina karpon polyn pherēte kai genēsesthe emoi mathētai* (John 15:8). Other passages from the Gospel of John also point to a form of glorification or worship of God by Jesus (cf. 7:39; 12:16; 13:31–32; 14:13). This is particularly visible in the introduction to

¹⁴ Klemens Rzymski, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian, 5,4*, in: *Pisma Ojców apostołskich. Nauka Dwunastu Apostołów. Barnaba. Klemens Rzymski. Ignacy Antiocheński. Polikarp. Hermes* (Pisma Ojców Kościoła, 1), trans. A. Lisiecki, Poznań 1924, p. 111.

¹⁵ M. Guarducci, *Il culto degli apostoli Pietro e Paolo sulla via Appia: riflessioni vecchie e nuove*, “Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Antiquité”, vol. 98/2 (1986), p. 833.

¹⁶ Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, in: *Tertulian. Wybór Pism* (Pisma Starożytnych Pisarzy, 5), trans. E. Stanula, Warszawa 1970, no. 35.

¹⁷ See Benedict XVI, *General audience on May 9, 2012*, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20120509.html [30.09.2020].

Jesus's high priestly prayer, where he asks the Father to glorify Him so that He can glorify the Father (cf. John 17:1). In addition, Jesus says that the glory which He has given to the Father is the entire work He has accomplished on earth (cf. John 17:4). The final step in the mission given by the Father will be to lay down His life for the salvation of man. This can be seen in the Hebraism used by John, "all flesh" (*pasēs sarkos*), which appears only once in the Fourth Gospel—in the passage in question (cf. John 17:2)¹⁸.

Jesus's monologue that reveals Peter's future ends with a call to action directed at the first of the Twelve: *Akolouthei moi* (John 21:19). The verb *akoloutheó* at the end of this pericope is used by Jesus in the present imperative. These words echo the dialogue that took place between Peter and Jesus several days earlier, at the Last Supper: "Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, where are you going?' Jesus answered, 'Where I am going you cannot follow me now (*akolouthēsai*); but you shall follow afterward (*akolouthēseis*)'" (John 13:36).

These words contain a call to action that determines Peter's stance from that moment onward: to walk in the footsteps of the Risen Jesus until he bears the ultimate witness, that is until he lays down his life. This involves adopting the attitude of a disciple—an attitude which Peter does not understand at the time, but still makes his pledge: "I will lay down my life for you" (*tēn psychēn mou hiper sou thēsō*, John 13:37). In the second part of his triptych *Jesus of Nazareth*, entitled *Holy Week: From the Entrance Into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, Joseph Ratzinger–Benedict XVI notes that Peter "must learn to await his hour. He must learn how to wait, how to persevere. He must learn the way of the disciple in order to be led, when his hour comes, to the place where he does not want to go (cf. Jn 21:18) and to receive the grace of martyrdom"¹⁹. Peter's path led him to Rome, where he died

¹⁸ See S. Mędała, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 13-21*, p. 152.

¹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week: From the Entrance Into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. P.J. Whitmore, San Francisco 2011, p. 72.

As Benedict XVI points out, "From that day, Peter 'followed' the Master with the precise awareness of his own fragility; but this understanding did not discourage him. Indeed, he knew that he could count on the presence of the Risen One beside him. From the naïve enthusiasm of initial acceptance, passing through the sorrowful experience of denial and the weeping of conversion, Peter succeeded in entrusting himself to that Jesus who adapted himself to his poor capacity of love. And in this way he shows us the way, notwithstanding all of our weakness. We know that Jesus adapts himself to this weakness of ours. We follow him with our poor capacity to love and we know that Jesus is good and he accepts us. It was a long journey for Peter that made him a trustworthy witness, 'rock' of the Church, because he was constantly open to the action of the Spirit of Jesus. Peter qualifies himself as a 'witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed' (I Pt 5:1). When he was to write these words he would already be elderly, heading towards the end of his life that will be sealed with martyrdom. He will then be ready to describe true joy and to indicate where it can be drawn from: the source is believing in and loving Christ with our weak but sincere faith, notwithstanding our fragility. He would therefore write to the Christians of his community, and says also to us: 'Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls' (I Pt 1:8–9)".

a martyr's death, thus becoming fully like Jesus: the one to whom he had made his profession of faith at the beginning of his mission by saying that He is the Christ, the Son of God (cf. Matthew 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20; John 6:69).

2. The Evolution of the Term “Martyr”

From an etymological point of view, the Greek word *martys* derives from the root (*s*)*mer* in the Proto-Indo-European language. In its original meaning, the root means “to take into account,” “to bear something in mind,” “to remember” (also “remember about something”) or “to be mindful”²⁰. In his article “*Martys* and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse: A Semantic Study,” Allison Albert Trites, Professor of the New Testament at the Acadia Divinity College, argues that the Greek word *martys* may not have originally meant “martyr” in today’s sense. Trites describes the evolution of the word as a five-step process. He notes that:

Diachronistically speaking, one can discern a logical process of five stages whereby the word *martys* came to mean “martyr”:

- 1) Originally, *martys* meant a witness in a court of law with no expectation of death.
- 2) Then it came to mean a man who testified to his faith in a law court and suffered death as the penalty for his witness.
- 3) Next, death is regarded as part of the witness.
- 4) *Martys* becomes equivalent to “martyr.” Here the idea of death is uppermost, though the idea of witness is not entirely lacking.
- 5) The idea of witness disappears, and the words *martys*, *martyrion*, *martyria*, and *martyrein*, are used absolutely to refer to martyrdom²¹.

In the Old Testament, the noun עֵד (*‘ēd*) appears many times and carries different meanings depending on the context. This can be seen, for example, in the name of the place where Jacob and Laban made the covenant symbolized by a pile of stones. Laban named the place in Aramaic as $\text{גַּרְסָה דִּדְוּתָא}$ (*j•gar sâh^adûtâ*), whereas Jacob used the Hebrew word גַּלְעָד (*gal’ēd*) (cf. Genesis 31:47–48). Another example can be found in the Book of Judges, where עֵד (*‘ēd*) is used in the word וְהַמְוֹדָע (*wəhammōw’ēd*), which means “something previously agreed upon with someone”—

See Benedict XVI, *General audience on May 24, 2006*, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060524.html [30.09.2020].

²⁰ See H. Strathmann, *martys*, *martyreō*, *martyria*, *martyrion*, in: *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 4, ed. G. Kittel, Stuttgart 1966, p. 478; J. Pokorny, (*s*)*mer-*, in: *Indigermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 3, Bern–Munich 1959, p. 969

²¹ A.A. Trites, *Martys and Martyrdom in the Apocalypse. A Semantic Study*, “Novum Testamentum”, vol. 15 (1973), footnote 1, pp. 72–73.

in this case an appointed signal in the form of a cloud of smoke (cf. Judges 20:38). In the First Book of Samuel (13:8), there is a reference to an appointed meeting: לַמּוֹדֵד (lammōw'ēd), and similar references can be found in 1 Samuel 13:11 (לַמּוֹדֵד or lammōw'ēd) and 1 Samuel 20:35 (לַמּוֹדֵד or lammōw'ēd).

Apart from the general usage, the words *martyś* (“witness”), *martyreō* (“to bear witness,” “to witness” or “to confirm”) and *martyria* (“testimony”) can be used in two specific contexts: legal and religious. The noun *martyrion* (“testimony,” “proof”) falls into a separate category²².

Terms related to the word “witness” are used multiple times in the New Testament: *martyś*²³ appears 34 times (mainly in Acts: 13 times); *martyrein*²⁴ appears

²² Cf. H. Strathmann, op. cit., pp. 486–489.

A number of usage examples for the words listed in this paragraph are provided below. In the legal sense, the word may refer to a person who can bear witness before a court of law with regard to an act committed by another person, for example Numbers 5:13; 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6–7; 19:15; John 8:17; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28. The Bible also contains references to false witnesses, who are despised by God and will suffer just punishment: Proverbs 6:19; 12:17; 19:5, 9; 21:28. God may also be called as a witness to a covenant, such as that made by Laban with Jacob (cf. Genesis 31:44) and by David with Jonathan (cf. 1 Samuel 20:23, 42), and will bear witness at the time of judgment (cf. Malachi 3:5). There is also an example where God and man (“His anointed”, i.e. the king) bear witness together about Samuel’s innocence (cf. 1 Samuel 12:5). Finally, Job refers to God as the witness of his innocence (cf. Job 16:19). As regards the religious sense, one may point to the text of the prophet Isaiah, who prophesizes that the God of Israel is the one and true God of whom Israelites may speak as His witnesses (cf. Isaiah 43:9–13; 44:7–11). There, the following phrase appears three times: “You are my witnesses”. The fourth expression can be found, among other places, in the Book of Ruth, where the word *martyrion* is used in reference to the confirmation of a contract according to the custom that existed in Israel, whereby drawing off one’s sandal and placing it on someone’s land meant taking possession of the land (cf. Ruth 4:7). Another use of the word can be found in the Book of Genesis, where Abraham gives Abimelech seven lambs as a token of an oath (cf. Genesis 21:30). Similarly, the book of the law to be put by the side of the Ark of the Covenant is a testimony against the Israelites’ defiance of the Lord, and so is the song that Moses was commanded to teach to the people of Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 31:19, 26).

²³ The word *martyś* in its original meaning of “a witness testifying in a trial based on his or her own knowledge” can be found in Mark 14:63 (cf. Matthew 26:65; 18:16). Another meaning is that of a person who can testify to or attest something. This may refer to God (cf. Romans 1:9; Philippians 1:8), men in general (cf. Luke 11:48; Luke 24:48; Hebrews 12:1) and those who act as witnesses of Christ in the work of preaching the Gospel (cf. Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 1 Peter 5:1; Revelation 11:3). Finally, the term may be used in reference to martyrs. In this case, there are two types of references: to Jesus (cf. Revelation 1:5; 3:14) and to men who died on account of their faith in Christ (cf. Acts 22:20; Revelation 2:13; 17:6). In the Book of Revelation, John also calls Christ a “witness” (1:5; 3:14).

²⁴ The word with the broadest range of meanings is the verb *martyreō*, which primarily refers to the bearing (or not bearing) of witness to or about someone or something. Such witness may be borne by the entire Trinity (cf. 1 John 5:7); by God the Father (cf. John 5:32, 37; 8:18; 1 John 5:9); by Jesus (cf. John 4:44; 7:7; 8:13; 18:37; Revelation 22:18); by the Holy Spirit (cf. John 15:26; 1 John 5:7); by men (cf. John 1:7–8, 15, 32, 34; 4:39; 15:27; Acts 22:5; 26:5; 1 John 4:14; 3 John 3, 6); by things (cf. John 5:39; 10:25); and in a general sense (cf. John 2:25). The verb may further be translated as “to testify to” or “to attest.” Once again, this action can be performed by God the Father (cf. John 5:32; 1 John 5:10); by God the Father and the Son (cf. John 3:11); by Jesus (cf. John 3:32; Revelation 22:20); by men (cf. John 19:35; Acts 23:11); and by angels (cf. Revelation 22:16). Moreover, the verb can be translated as “to speak well of someone” or “to give testimony about something” with reference to God (cf. Acts 13:22); Jesus (cf. Acts 14:3); or men (cf. Luke 4:22; John 3:26; 3 John 12). Finally, it can be

76 times (with the highest number of occurrences in John: 33 times, Acts: 11 times, and 1 John and 3 John: 10 times); *martyria*²⁵ appears 37 times (including 14 times in the Fourth Gospel, 7 times in 1 John and 3 John and 9 times in Revelation); and *martyrion*²⁶ appears 20 times (with the highest number of occurrences in the synoptic Gospels: 9 times). According to the above numbers, the words of this family appear most frequently in John's writings: *martyrein* occurs 47 times and *martyria* occurs 30 times; the words *martyrs* and *martyrein* do not appear in the Gospel of John. Outside of biblical literature, the verb *martyrein* ("to die as a martyr") and the noun *martyria* ("martyrdom") can be found in the early Christian literature, specifically in the *Martyrium Polycarpi* edited by Euarestos, the earliest known account of a martyr's death²⁷. The letter was probably written one year after the death of Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna (today's Izmir in Turkey), with the provision that the year of the apostolic father's death has been disputed. The event is generally dated to somewhere between AD 155 and AD 177, therefore the letter is believed to have been written between AD 156 and AD 178.

3. The Martyr as a Model of Faith and Love

The main criteria used when declaring someone a martyr are faith and love. When one thinks of a martyr, the image that immediately springs to mind is that of a person who has given his or her life for the faith, for Christ. This dimension of

translated as "to die a martyr's death" or "to bear witness" (cf. 1 Timothy 6:13). Another meaning is "to be attested to by something" or "to receive a testimony from someone". This can refer to the bearing of witness to Jesus (cf. Hebrews 7:17) and to things (cf. Romans 3:21). Yet another possible translation is "to be well spoken of", "to be of good repute" or "to receive approval from someone" when used in reference to people (cf. Acts 6:3; 16:2; 22:12; Hebrews 11:2, 4–5).

²⁵ The feminine noun *martyria* can be translated in two ways. The first meaning is that of the "bearing of witness" or the "giving of testimony" (cf. John 1:7; Revelation 11:7). In the second variant, the word is translated as "testimony": a testimony in a trial (cf. Mark 14:55, 59); a testimony of true events, for example historical ones (cf. John 19:35; 21:24); an opinion (cf. 1 Timothy 3:7; Titus 1:13); a testimony about Christ and His teachings given by both Divine Persons and by men (cf. John 5:31, 32, 36; Acts 22:18; Revelation 12:11); and Jesus's martyrdom (cf. Revelation 6:9; 20:4).

²⁶ The neuter noun *martyrion* means "testimony" or "proof." The word has dual use: it can mean something that acts as a proof of some acts or behaviors (cf. Matthew 8:4; Mark 6:11; James 5:3) or it can refer to statements, utterances or confessions (cf. Acts 4:33; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 1:8). As regards the second use of the noun, it has been derived from the Old Testament, where it refers to the Tent of Witness (cf. Acts 7:44; Revelation 15:5).

²⁷ Eusebius of Caesarea included *Martyrium Polycarpi* (with some modifications) in his most notable work, the *Ecclesiastical History*. See A. Świderkówna (trans.), *Świętego Polikarpa Biskupa Smyrny i świętego męczennika list do Kościoła w Filippi*, in: *Pierwsi świadkowie. Wybór najstarszych pism chrześcijańskich* (Ojcowie żywi, 8), ed. M. Starowieyski, Kraków 1988, pp. 191–214; Euzebiusz z Cezarei, *Historia kościelna* (Złota Myśl Teologiczna, 70), trans. A. Caba, ed. H. Pietras, Kraków 2013, IV. 15; J.M. Kozłowski, *Płonął ogniem, a nie spalał się... Analiza i interpretacja "Martyrium Polycarpi" 15,2* (Scripta. Instytut Filologii Klasycznej UW, 6), Warsaw 2014.

martyrdom is referred to as “red martyrdom.” But, one may ask, where does the strength to lay down one’s life come from? The answer is simple: “from deep and intimate union with Christ, because martyrdom and the vocation to martyrdom are not the result of human effort but the response to a project and call of God, they are a gift of his grace that enables a person, out of love, to give his life for Christ and for the Church, hence for the world”²⁸, as Benedict XVI explained during his general audience at Castel Gandolfo in August 2010. According to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, martyrdom as a manifestation of the “fullest proof of love” involves transformation into an image of the Master and free acceptance of death for the salvation of the world through conformity to Jesus²⁹, which echoes the words “greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

In this context, it is important to remember that Christians grow to become fit for different ministries in the Church and receive different graces in the school of faith, a school which in itself is “not a triumphal march but a journey marked daily by suffering and love, trials and faithfulness”³⁰. Only in this faithfulness to the daily choices that Christians experience in the school of faith can one develop the cardinal and theological virtues that predispose one to do good and profess faith with courage despite the various adversities in which the world of today abounds.

Besides the red dimension of martyrdom, there is also a white dimension: the “bloodless” sacrifice. This form of sacrifice consists in devoting oneself to asceticism, an example being the Desert Fathers who set out for remote places to confront their passions and worldly desires, thus laying the foundation for the emergence of monasticism. In other words, white martyrdom is characterized by a radical renouncement of all things for God. In that sense, the papacy and the lives of the popes can be described as a form of white martyrdom characterized by several attributes which are discussed below on the basis of the teachings of Joseph Ratzinger–Benedict XVI.

4. Aspects of the Martyrological Dimension of the Primacy

It is the author’s view that the papacy has a clear dimension of white martyrdom. The arguments offered in this section are mainly based on the texts by Joseph Ratzinger–Benedict XVI in which the Bavarian-born theologian addresses

²⁸ Benedict XVI, *General audience on August 11, 2010*, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20100811.html [30.09.2020].

²⁹ Vatican II, *Constitutio dogmatica de Ecclesia* Lumen Gentium, no. 42, “Acta Apostolicae Sedis” (hereinafter: AAS) 57/1 (1965), p. 48.

³⁰ Benedict XVI, *General Audience of May 24, 2006*.

various aspects of the Petrine ministry—a service which was not easy in the past and remains challenging today. The theology of the martyrological dimension of Petrine primacy was manifested in a particularly vivid manner during the final weeks of Benedict XVI's pontificate, but it had also been presented in an earlier paper entitled “The Primacy of the Pope and the Unity of the People of God,” delivered by Joseph Ratzinger—then archbishop of Munich and Freising—in Rome during a session of the Catholic Academy of Bavaria organized to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Paul VI's birth, entitled “In the Service of Unity: The Essence and Tasks of the Office of Peter.” In Joseph Ratzinger's view, the event that played a crucial role in the development of the theology of the primacy and in revealing its martyrological dimension was the debate conducted by Cardinal Reginald Pole with King Henry VIII, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and Bishop Richard Sampson with regard to the events taking place in England at the time³¹. The main points discussed by the Bavarian-born theologian were taken from Cardinal Pole's *De Summo Pontifice Christi in terris vicario, eiusque officio et potestate* of 1569 (written during the conclave for Cardinal Giulio della Rovere).

a) The Imitation of Christ

In this aspect, the image of the pope is perceived solely from a Christological point of view, therefore one might say that the pontiff is a reflection of the image of Christ. According to Benedict XVI, his service should be “rendered with simplicity and willingness, imitating our Teacher and Lord who did not come to be served but to serve (cf. Mt 20:28), and at the Last Supper washed the Apostles' feet, commanding them to do likewise (cf. Jn 13:13–14)”³².

The exercise of this ministry consists in *imitatio Christi*, following the direction set by Proto-Isaiah, who—according to Pole—is the mirror of the papal office. As it is written in the Book of Isaiah, “of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore” (9:7). In addition, the preceding verse—containing the phrase *Parvulus enim natus est nobis* (Isaiah 9:6)—reveals the Christology of humiliation that manifests itself in Christ's complete obedience to the Father and His assumption of the role of the savior, as a consequence of which He became the “little one” (*parvulus*). Looking

³¹ See J. Ratzinger, *The Primacy of the Pope and the Unity of the People of God*, “Communio” 41 (2014), p. 120.

³² BENEDICT XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Members of the College of Cardinals on April 22, 2005*, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050422_cardinals.html [30.09.2020].

at this passage from the perspective of the primatial office, the person chosen as the Vicar of Christ is born anew for an entirely new role that expresses itself in “we” rather than “I.” The person appointed to that office is reborn for others: the lambs and the sheep in God’s flock (cf. John 21:15–17). Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6 contains the phrase *et factus est principatus super umerum eius*. According to Reginald Pole, these words refer to the burden which the pope and Christ have taken upon their shoulders. In this verse, the most important concept is not that of “government,” but rather that of burden—the burden that the pope must take upon himself like Christ: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29)³³. Furthermore, Pole believes that the title “Mighty Hero” conveys the idea of coming to resemble the Lord through love that is ready for martyrdom; the English cardinal finds such love in the Song of Songs: “for love is strong as death” (8:6).³⁴

In the passage from the Book of Isaiah referenced above, there are two groups of titles: those of humility and lowliness and those of majesty. Importantly, the two groups interpenetrate and complement each other, thus remaining constantly interrelated. The first group contains the titles *parvulus natus*, *filius datus* and *principatus super humerum*, whereas the second one contains the titles *magni consilii angelus* and *princeps pacis*. As noted by Joseph Ratzinger in line with Reginald Pole’s reasoning, these titles are fully manifested in Jesus Christ Himself and in His vicar, the Successor of Saint Peter, although—by virtue of his similarity to Christ—the pope only receives them after his humiliation. Furthermore, it is argued that the most appropriate place for such humiliation is the cross, which acts as a counterbalance to the power of this world. Hence, the cross is the most deserving place for the *repraesentatio* to be fulfilled³⁵.

In this context, one must not forget other words spoken by Jesus to the crowds and the disciples: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take

³³ From a theological point of view, the passage from the Gospel of Matthew obviously describes the love that expresses Jesus’s attitude towards the world—the willingness to take upon Himself the world’s sins. In the first part of this triptych *Jesus of Nazareth*, entitled *From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, Ratzinger points to Jesus’s pure and true goodness—the only form of goodness that befits the great man and ruler that is Christ. At the center of this logion stands the Greek word *praus*, which can be translated as “mild”, “humble,” “meek” or “gentle,” echoing the words of the prophet Zechariah as he foretells the arrival of a time of peace that will be brought by a righteous and humble king: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass” (9:9–10). His reign will not be a political or military one, but rather a reign of peace that—to a large extent—does not belong or conform to this world. This reign of the Great King will stand in contrast to the reign of the rulers of this world, since it is not aimed at material gain and does not derive from human abilities, but rather from the grace of God. Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker, New York 2007, pp. 81–82.

³⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *The Primacy of the Pope*, p. 125.

³⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 125–126.

up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34; cf. Matthew 10:38). Consequently, the idea of imitating Christ manifests itself in its fullest form in being rejected by others. The Successor of Saint Peter and the Vicar of Christ is often met with rejection, and it is this rejection that, in the case of Jesus, led to two events: conviction and crucifixion. Therefore, the original meaning of the concept in the early Christianity was “martyrdom,” and “martyr” meant someone who became similar to Jesus by bearing witness until the end through the testimony of the word³⁶.

b) The Cross

The second aspect of the martyrological dimension of Petrine primacy—besides *imitatio*—is the cross in the shadow of which the Vicar of Christ fulfills his mission. In this aspect, the *Sedes Apostolica* can be equated with the *Crux Christi*. The English cardinal explains the parallel as follows: the place where the Successor of Saint Peter exercises his office is the one where the Prince of the Apostles performed his service in the shadow of the cross which he himself planted there. Reginald Pole further notes that Peter never abandoned the cross, but rather allowed himself to be nailed to it—head down at his own request as the tradition goes. Thus, on that very cross, the words spoken by the Risen Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee were fulfilled. Looking back, one can see—as Pole also points out—that Peter did not follow his own will, but stayed true to the will of God that guided him. Furthermore, one can see that this binding of both Peter’s and his successors’ will is the cross that reveals itself in the office of the Vicar of Christ on earth. Consequently, it is this binding that lends credibility to the resemblance between the person sitting on the *Thronos Petrou* and Jesus. In the fact that the will of the Vicar of Christ is bound, one can also discern an element of responsibility that manifests itself in the daily profession of *Sy ei ho Christos, ho Huios tou Theou tou zōntos* (Matthew 16:16), which is made both personally and universally—on behalf of the entire Church³⁷.

The ministry of the Petrine office is uniquely marked by the cross and by the presence of the one who exercises his office in the shadow of that cross. The office is a unique service on the path to the perfection of love, one which requires striving to become perfect “as [the] heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Being the Successor of Peter and the Vicar of Christ on earth means giving “a total, faithful and fruitful gift of self”³⁸, thus becoming incorporated into Jesus’s norm of conduct, into

³⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 166.

³⁷ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *The Primacy of the Pope*, p. 126–127.

³⁸ Benedict XVI, *Message of the Holy Father for the 49th World Day of Prayer for Vocations on April 29, 2012*, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/vocations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20111018_xlix-vocations.html [30.09.2020].

His logic rather than the logic of this world (which differs from God's expectations). Persisting in the shadow of the Master's cross means staying true to His word; it is an element of vocation in which one is to persevere despite the adversities that stand in the way of one's ministry. Only in the logic of the cross can one hold the office of the Vicar of Christ. This is a "logic of bending down to wash feet, the logic of service"³⁹ in which true humility and responsibility for the exercise of the office in the service of others come to fruition.

The service is challenging due to the fact that the Vicar of Christ is required to persist in the obedience of the cross⁴⁰ as noted by Benedict XVI during his homily to new cardinals on November 21, 2010. The pope further observes that the ministry is not the easiest one because its logic is entirely different from that by which the world is guided⁴¹. It incorporates a different mindset, a way of thinking that follows God's criteria which sometimes stand in contradiction to those of men. One such criterion is certainly the kind of love that transcends the political or ideological categories in which men's conduct is only driven by the desire for power or money or by the urge to manipulate human minds for personal gain. The logic of the cross in which the Successor of Christ operates is part of the broader logic of love that wishes for the good of others without expecting anything in return: the logic of God who "loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1). Thus, as Benedict XVI explained during a meeting with the German pilgrims who took part in the inauguration of his pontificate, this is about "the impulse of love, which has its own momentum and does not seek itself but opens the person to the service of truth, justice and the good"⁴².

c) Humility and Responsibility

Another aspect inherent in the theology of martyrdom associated with the primacy of Peter is humility, which in this context is understood not as a moral virtue, but as the awareness of one's own deficiency or imperfection that requires God's justifying grace rather than human efforts alone. However, the crux of this

³⁹ Benedict XVI, *Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Ordinary Public Consistory for the Creation of New Cardinals on November 20, 2010*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20101120_concistoro.html [30.09.2020].

⁴⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Eucharistic Concelebration with the New Cardinals and Presentation of the Cardinal's Ring on November 21, 2010*, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20101121_anello-cardinalizio.html [30.09.2020].

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴² Benedict XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the German Pilgrims Who Had Come to Rome for the Inauguration Ceremony of the Pontificate on April 25, 2005*, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050425_german-pilgrims.html [30.09.2020].

theological dimension of Petrine primacy is personal responsibility, which, rather than being in opposition to *humilitas*, is a manifestation of it. This responsibility manifests itself in the “we” of the Church: a relationship in which primacy and collegiality complement instead of competing with each other. This interdependence serves the unity of the Church through the perspective of the cross as revealed by Jesus. Hence, the English cardinal argues that the man most suited to hold the office of the Vicar of Christ is the one who resembles Christ rather than the one who appears the most qualified from a human point of view. In other words, the man who does not engage into political games or conform to the criteria of human judgment, and who has the clout and strength to impact others in a favorable manner at any given time. This view is supported by Saint Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: “Let no one deceive himself. If any one among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God (...) So let no one boast of men” (3:18–19, 21)⁴³.

Going further, one can notice that in accordance with the tradition, the person appointed as the bishop of Rome adopts a new name—very much like Peter, who received his new name from the Lord. The new name adopted by the candidate is the starting point of a new mission given by Jesus and accepted by the electee. By assuming the name, one is mandated by the Lord to act as the rock, strengthen the faithful (cf. Luke 22:32) and be the guarantor of unity (cf. John 17:21–22). Therefore, by being elected to the See of Peter, the pope is given two tasks: to take responsibility and to care for the people entrusted to him⁴⁴. During his last general audience on February 27, 2013, Benedict XVI made the following comment: “Here, allow me to go back once again to 19 April 2005. The real gravity of the decision was also due to the fact that from that moment on I was engaged always and forever by the Lord. Always—anyone who accepts the Petrine ministry no longer has any privacy. He belongs always and completely to everyone, to the whole Church. In a manner of speaking, the private dimension of his life is completely eliminated”⁴⁵.

⁴³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *The Primacy of the Pope*, p. 126–127.

⁴⁴ In the responsibility faced by the bishop of Rome as the head of the Universal Church, one can see the resolution to persist in the great tradition of the faith and stay true to the Word of God so that the two most important elements of Christianity remain alive in the consciousness of the Christians and in the world of which the Church is part. Benedict XVI said that “the Pope knows that in his important decisions, he is bound to the great community of faith of all times, to the binding interpretations that have developed throughout the Church’s pilgrimage. Thus, his power is not being above, but at the service of, the Word of God. It is incumbent upon him to ensure that this Word continues to be present in its greatness and to resound in its purity, so that it is not torn to pieces by continuous changes in usage”. See Benedict XVI, *Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Mass of Possession of the Chair of the Bishop of Rome on May 7, 2005*, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050507_san-giovanni-laterano.html [30.09.2020].

⁴⁵ Benedict XVI, *General audience on February 27, 2013*, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2013/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20130227.html [30.09.2020].

From the moment the pope accepts the office, his life progresses in two dimensions: the anabatic dimension and the diabatic dimension. The anabatic dimension relates to the fact that he is the *pontifex*, the one who builds bridges between the present and eternity, between our transitory *hodie* and our *cras* (which will become the permanent *nunc*). And above all, he is the one whose office is founded on the relationship of two persons: Jesus Christ and Simon Peter⁴⁶. The diabatic dimension, in turn, relates to the fact that the pope is the keystone of Christian unity. It is in him that the unity desired by Christ for those who became believers and accepted baptism becomes reality (cf. Mark 16:15). Therefore, it can be argued that for Christians, the Successor of Saint Peter is a point of reference and a guarantor of orthodox learning and faith. This, in turn, manifests itself in the fact that the true agenda followed by the one elected to the Petrine office is not to act upon his own will or ideas, but to act upon the will and ideas of Christ by listening intently to the words spoken to him by Jesus. And here, there appears another aspect of humility: submitting completely to God's guidance by renouncing one's ideas and preconceptions and choosing a path which is not necessarily consistent with the stance of the one who exercises the Petrine ministry⁴⁷.

The papacy is not a ministry and an office for its own sake, but rather for the benefit of others—never for one's own gain. The exercise of the Petrine ministry consists in serving others and has at its heart a mission of mercy in both the spiritual sphere and the material sphere. At the Ordinary Public Consistory on November 20, 2010, Benedict XVI noted that “the criterion of greatness and primacy according to God is not domination but service”⁴⁸. The ministry of service to which the pope referred is not fulfilled solely in the service of the individual to whom governance is entrusted, but also in the service of the *communio*, in communication with other bishops and thus with the People of God⁴⁹. Hence, according to Benedict XVI, “the Pope must be the first to make himself the servant of all”⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ Cf. G.L. Müller, op. cit., p. 169.

⁴⁷ See Benedict XVI, *Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Mass for the Inauguration of the Pontificate on April 24, 2005*, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050424_inizio-pontificato.html [30.09.2020].

⁴⁸ Benedict XVI, *Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Ordinary Public Consistory for the Creation of New Cardinals on November 20, 2010*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20101120_concistoro.html [30.09.2020].

⁴⁹ In the homily delivered at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran during the mass for the possession of the Chair of the Bishop of Rome, Benedict XVI noted that “the power that Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors is, in an absolute sense, a mandate to serve. The power of teaching in the Church involves a commitment to the service of obedience to the faith. The Pope is not an absolute monarch whose thoughts and desires are law. On the contrary: the Pope's ministry is a guarantee of obedience to Christ and to his Word. He must not proclaim his own ideas, but rather constantly bind himself and the Church to obedience to God's Word, in the face of every attempt to adapt it or water it down, and every form of opportunism”. See Benedict XVI, *Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Mass of Possession of the Chair of the Bishop of Rome on May 7, 2005*.

⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, *Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Ordinary Public Consistory for*

As the personification of the unity of the Universal Church, the pope is uniquely positioned under the mandate given to Peter to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments. Besides the mandate that Peter received from Jesus, one may also speak of the essence of his office. In this respect, three elements of the office may be distinguished: building the church, holding the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven and having the power to bind and loose (cf. Matthew 16:18–19).

To summarize the above deliberations on the martyrological dimension of Petrine primacy, the ministry of the Successor of Saint Peter can be perceived as the service of a faithful and true witness of Jesus Christ (cf. Revelation 3:14). It is in the bishop of Rome that we can see one who does not do his will, but the “will of God” (1 John 2:17), following the example of Jesus and later of Peter the Apostle, “a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1). As demonstrated above, the mystery of the ministry of the Vicar of Christ is fulfilled to its greatest extent in imitating the Lord, in persisting in the suffering of the cross and in serving the truth of which the Successor of Saint Peter is the guardian and advocate. The service of the Vicar of Christ stands in opposition to the world that abides by its own rules. Peter personifies the principle of unity which consolidates the entire Roman-Catholic world and often acts as a counterbalance to secular state governance and to the divided Christendom. The profession of faith that he makes to God every day is a daily act of love in which he renounces his human desires and chooses God’s will—even if it is sometimes difficult to comprehend.

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