

I have come to Ghent on horseback to attend the funeral of my brother Hubert and my sister Margareta in the Vijd chapel.

All city and church councillors are present, but I am closest to the tomb and cannot hold back my tears. I am in a kind of trance. There is so much to take care of and I'm not talking about the estate or the inheritance taxes but primarily about the studio and the finished and unfinished works of art.

Johannes has arrived in Ghent as well. He learnt about the death of his brother and sister while on a diplomatic mission for the Duke of Burgundy, and is now stricken by grief. Together we need to take the final steps in the succession to Hubert and Margareta's estate. Johannes has carefully thought about the unfinished altarpiece for the Ghent alderman's chapel, representing the adoration of the Mystic Lamb. He will certainly complete the painting, but the problem is that for the time being, he can only draw up a work schedule. Johannes takes me by the arm. "Do you remember the Pythagorean theorem?" I can't help laughing as schoolmaster Engelbert drummed it into me long ago. "Then you can enlarge the sketches drawn by me or Hubert and transfer them to the panels."

Before I begin the transfer of sketches, I will have to practice this technique well. Until then, I have lots of things to do: cutting and preparing the panels according to the dimensions specified by Johannes ...

Ill at ease, I hand a portfolio to Johannes. Johannes takes the portfolio and has a look at my watercolours of various types of horses in different poses. Hubert already had drawn one panel with horsemen and I believe I'm able to draw the rest. Johannes nods his approval and shows me one of the lateral panels of the altarpiece, depicting pilgrims ...

I'm surprised to see a younger version of myself among the pilgrims. Johannes begins to laugh. 'I absolutely wanted to include you in the altarpiece to reward you for your dedication, and that's why your head with your typical haircut stands out among all these bearded figures.' Suddenly I notice the last figure in the panel with the pilgrims: a lady with a big smile on her face. 'But that is mother!' 'That's right.' Johannes cannot hide his watering eyes. 'Although she has never been on a pilgrimage, I thought she could not be left out, and the only space available on the panel was in the background with the pilgrims.' 'And you could not leave out father either, I see?' 'Yes, he is the first one of the Just Judges. Father was the only suitable model, since he was a lawyer, and in my view always had a just disposition, both towards us and in general.'