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ARTYKUŁY · ARTICLES

REV. ARKADIUSZ JASIEWICZ

The Mystery of the Lord's Nativity in the Sermons of Leo the Great¹

The Mystery of the Lord's Nativity lies in the centre of Christian spirituality. Despite the fact that Christmas remains one of the least understood celebrations of the western civilisation. Paraphrasing the words of Karl Rahner – every year boils down to a number of similar rituals: some Christmas mood, pious or humanitarian clichés, a bunch of presents, and then things return to normal. Every Christian is obliged to try to resist the magic of Christmas.² This fact does not seem surprising if we consider how few theological publications there are concerning the birth of Christ, especially if we compare it to other events of the salvation history, e.g. Calvary or the empty grave.

¹ Source text of the Sermons of Leo the Great used in the article: *Sancti Leonis Magni, Romani pontificis, opera omnia*, vol. 1, accurante J.-P. Migne, Parisiis 1846, 141–468 (Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina, 54); *Sancti Leonis Magni, Romani pontificis, tractatus septem et nonaginta* [Tractatus 1–38], recensuit A. Chavasse, Turnholti 1973 (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina, 138); Léon le Grand, *Sermons*, vol. 1, Paris 1964² (Sources Chrésiennes, 22 bis) and its English translations: *The Letters and Sermons of Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome*, translated, with introduction, notes, and indices by C. Lett Feltoe, Grand Rapids [2004] (A Select Library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second series, 12) [Sermons XXI–XXIV, XXVI–XXVIII, XXXI, XXXIII, XXXVI]; *Select Sermons of S. Leo the Great on the Incarnation*, translated, with notes by W. Bright, London 1886 [Sermon LXVI].

² Cf. K. Rahner, *Bóg stał się człowiekiem*, przekł. M. Węclawski, Poznań 1978, p. 53.

It was different in the times of the Church Fathers. Theology of incarnation was constantly present in the thought of the ancient Church, despite the fact that many of the fathers were not even familiar with the Feast of the Nativity, e.g. Justin Martyr or Irenaeus. The incredible passion, love and hope with which generations of theologians drew from biblical records, constantly inspires and encourages to reflect on the great mystery of faith in different shades of Christian pilgrimage.

A true promoter of the mystery of Nativity was Pope Leo I, also known as Saint Leo the Great. His pontificate took place in the difficult times of barbarian invasions of Italy. In the context of his theological and cultural formation, Saint Leo proved to be a truly unique person with broad intellectual horizons. His charism of a shepherd, fully devoted to serving the Church, made him the one disseminating Christian teachings and participating in the creation of the new civilisation of Europe. We know much about Pope Leo's activity thanks to his incredibly beautiful sermons written in Latin, about a hundred of which have been preserved, and thanks to his letters (about one hundred and fifty). Among his sermons the ones that interest us the most are: on the Feast of the Nativity (11 sermons) and on the Feast of the Epiphany (8 sermons). On the basis of these source texts we shall try to elaborate on the main thoughts concerning the mystery of the Nativity. First we shall discuss the spiritual aspects of the mystery of incarnation, then we shall present the Lord's coming as the epiphany of God's Grace, and lastly we shall indicate the attitude one should adopt towards the Mystery of the Birth of Christ.

1. Joy and Light – the Fruits of the Nativity of the Lord³

Saint Leo begins his first sermon on the Feast of the Nativity during his pontificate with the following words: "Our Saviour, dearly-beloved,

³ Cf. L. Pidolle, S. *Léon, chantre de l'humble et sublime mystère de Noël*, "Connaissance des Pères de l'Eglise" 115 (2009), p. 40–58.

was born today: let us be glad. For there is no proper place for sadness, when we keep the birthday of the Life, which destroys the fear of mortality and brings to us the joy of promised eternity. No one is kept from sharing in this happiness. There is for all one common measure of joy, because as our Lord the destroyer of sin and death finds none free from charge, so is He come to free us all. Let the saint exult in that he draws near to victory. Let the sinner be glad in that he is invited to pardon. Let the gentile take courage in that he is called to life.”⁴

The author of *Sermons* very often urges his listeners to go through the time of Christmas in a joyful way, since the time of our Saviour's birth is our chance for eternal life, liberation from the fear of death and liberation from sin for all men. Christ's birth brings reward for the saint, forgiveness for the sinners and light for those who live in the darkness of death. He encourages us in joyful celebration of the day, which he calls the day of salvation: “Let us be glad in the Lord, dearly-beloved, and rejoice with spiritual joy that there has dawned for us the day of ever-new redemption, of ancient preparation, of eternal bliss.”⁵

The joy of the Lord's arrival reveals divine greatness and glory, but at the same time shows the enormous love the Creator has for his humble creatures: “Let the righteous then rejoice in the LORD, and let the hearts of believers turn to GOD'S praise, and the sons of men confess His wondrous acts; since in this work of GOD especially our humble estate realizes how highly its Maker values it.”⁶

The fruit of God's love is the joy radiant with the Light of Christ. The day of His Birth is a day to rejoice, as the Light of His Epiphany is shining upon us. Born of a Virgin, made Himself visible to the world.⁷

The author mentions that although all God's epiphanies are a reason to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil 4:4), the Nativity of the Lord inclines us to spiritual joy even more, as it shines brighter than on any other day. For Leo the Great Christmas is a celebration radiant with Light. This Light is

⁴ Sermon XXI (On the Feast of the Nativity I), 1, p. 220.

⁵ Sermon XXII (On the Feast of the Nativity II), 1, p. 222.

⁶ Sermon XXIV (On the Feast of the Nativity IV), 2, p. 229.

⁷ Cf. Sermon XXXII (On the Feast of the Epiphany II).

the deity of Jesus Christ, “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God” – as the Nicene Creed proclaims. Following *Depositio martyrum*⁸ one can assume that Christmas was introduced into the liturgical calendar about 330 AD in Rome as the confirmation of accepting the decisions of the Council of Nicaea by the Church in Rome. The Council was a reaction to the heresy of Arianism,⁹ that is why the expression “of one Being (*homoousios*) with the Father” appeared in the Nicene Creed. In Sermon XXV on the Feast of the Nativity Leo confirmed it by reminding that: the Son of God is the Light that looked upon the blind “and veiled with his body the splendor of his majesty.”¹⁰ Therefore, the Light itself cannot be separated from its source: “since the splendor born from a light is not posterior to the light, and the true light was never lacking its splendor, the substantial always having its shining, just as the substantial always has its existing. But the manifestation of this splendor is called mission, by which Christ appeared to the world. [...] As has been written, ‘To those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, a light has shone.’”¹¹

The Church chose 25 December to celebrate Christmas because calendar time corresponds with the “rebirth” of the sun after the winter solstice. What the Church saw in this sign was the rebirth of the One, who became true Light. Saint Leo encourages then: “Confine the material light to your bodily senses, and with all your mental powers embrace that ‘true light which lighteth every man that cometh into this world,’ (Jn 1 : 9) and of which the prophet says, ‘Come unto Him and be enlightened, and your faces shall not blush’ (Ps 34 : 5).”¹²

Quoting the words of Christ: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfil” (Mt 5 : 17),

⁸ The earliest information comes from *Depositio martyrum* dated back to 354 AD, and written about 20 years earlier (335–336).

⁹ Heresy negating consubstantiality and co-equality of the three persons of the Trinity as well as Christ’s deity.

¹⁰ Sermon XXV (On the Feast of the Nativity V), 2; <http://www.pathsoflove.com/blog/2009/12/christmas-sermon-25-of-leo-the-great> (10 Sept. 2013)

¹¹ Ibidem 3.

¹² Sermon XXVII (On the Feast of the Nativity VII), 6, p. 236.

Leo refers to the fulfilment of the New Testament in Jesus Christ, who became the light of truth. It is true that the Old Testament heralded His presence in the prophets' teachings, however, the fulfilment of time was accomplished in the birth of Jesus as man.¹³ In His divine goodness "His mercy has imparted many gifts of His providence [...] when in Christ the very Mercy has descended to sinners, the very Truth to those that are astray, the very Life to those that are dead."¹⁴ The Light of the Gospel presents itself as *lumen veritatis*,¹⁵ that comes to "scatter the darkness of human ignorance."¹⁶ Saint Leo often presents Christ as the Truth, which brings complete liberation from ignorance and lies. These earthly errors and conflicting notions by a falsely-called science according to Leo come from "the craft of misleading demons."¹⁷ As Leo indicates in his sermon on the Feast of the Epiphany the lack of truth is the worst form of famine humans can suffer: "He, the Bread of Life and the Food of reason that came down from heaven, removed that worse than all famines under which the Egyptians' minds were labouring, the lack of truth."¹⁸

Every man can look for the truth and find it, just like these three men who "follow the leading of the light above, and with steadfast gaze obeying the indications of the guiding splendour, are led to the recognition of the Truth by the brilliance of Grace."¹⁹ How great their joy must have been that from their original bond and from earthly errors they could be called to eternal bliss.²⁰ Men should therefore accept with faith this divine Light, the Truth that "came down from heaven" for our salvation.

¹³ Cf. Sermon XXV, 4.

¹⁴ Sermon XXIV, 1, p. 229.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibidem* 5, p. 231; Sermon XXV, 4; Sermon XXIX (On the Feast of the Nativity IX), 2; Sermon XXX, 1. The expressions *lumen veritatis* and *lux veritatis* appear 11 times in the sermons and *splendor veritatis* is used once: Sermon XXVIII (On the Feast of the Epiphany VIII), 2.

¹⁶ Sermon XXV, 1.

¹⁷ Sermon XXIII (On the Feast of the Nativity III), 3, p. 227.

¹⁸ Sermon XXXIII (On the Feast of the Epiphany III), 4, p. 247.

¹⁹ Sermon XXXI (On the Feast of the Epiphany I), 2, p. 244.

²⁰ Cf. Sermon XXIII, 3, p. 227.

Saint Leo constantly encourages believers to have faith in the power of the Lord's coming.

Pope Leo also preaches that men's acceptance of the miracle of the Saviour's Nativity is already a gift of God, and that the sign that led the wise men from the far East with such strength and splendour, was the expression of divine grace itself.²¹

That is why the holy liturgy is a privileged occasion to experience the light of the grace of the Nativity. Through the proclamation of the Gospel the act of the Mystery of Salvation is made present and revealed in this divine miracle.²² For Salvation, as Pope Leo indicates, comes to man in the *sacramentum* of the Word: "And are to be regarded as having made no slight progress, who entertain no doubt as to what they have heard, so that even if they cannot, as yet, clearly apprehend some Scriptural mystery, they still most firmly believe that in the Divine books there is no falsehood."²³ The Lord's coming is expressed in the liturgy by yearly celebrations of Christmas: "for as the year rolls round, there recurs for us the commemoration of our salvation [...]; on which we are bound with hearts up-lifted to adore the divine mystery: so that what is the effect of GOD'S great gift may be celebrated by the Church's great rejoicings."²⁴

2. Lord's Nativity as the Epiphany of God's Devotion

Contrary to Leo's sermons on Lent, sermons on the Feast of the Nativity touch on various topics. Leo does not focus on Christ's birth only, he tries to place it in a greater, broader context.

²¹ Cf. Sermon XXXV (On the Feast of the Epiphany V), 1.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Sermon LXVI (On the Passion XV), 1, p. 58.

²⁴ Sermon XXII, 1, p. 222.

2.1. "Undeniably great is the mystery of devotion" (1 Tim 3:16)

When Leo the Great encourages believers to discover the gift of the mystery of incarnation, he emphasises that God's grace and devotion are of crucial importance in the process. Coming to this world Christ fulfilled the promises of the Old Testament, and, as we have mentioned before, brought the plenitude of gifts of the New Testament. Consequently, Leo talks about Christ being a sacrament, a sign of grace, quoting the words of Paul the Apostle: "et manifeste magnum est pietatis sacramentum quod manifestatum est in carne iustificatum est in spiritu apparuit angelis praedicatum est gentibus creditum est in mundo adsumptum est in gloria" (1 Tim 3:16 Vulgate). Similarly to other Latin Fathers, Pope Leo adopts and spreads the use of the word "mystery" (*sacramentum*) to refer to important events in Christ's life and liturgical celebrations.²⁵ Saint Augustine also uses the term *sacramenta* to refer to liturgical celebrations of the Church, but he does that less frequently than Pope Leo.²⁶

Christmas is therefore a mystery, "the great mystery of devotion," the completion of which is Easter – the mystery of God's grace for the salvation of the world: "the Son of God, begotten before the ages by the Father, and eternal with the Father and co-eternal in con-substantial equality, came into this world through the womb of the Virgin in this sacrament of chosen tenderness, in which and from which 'Wisdom has built herself a home' (Prov 9:1), and the unchangeable Divinity of the Word fitted for itself the form of a slave, in the likeness of sinful flesh."²⁷

Following Paul the Apostle, Saint Leo attributes the words "the great mystery of devotion" to Christ and his mystery of salvation, which is continued in the Church. He stresses the mystery of God's grace even more by the use of the word *pietas*, which has a second meaning in Leo's

²⁵ Cf. J. De Ghellinck, *Pour l'histoire du mot « sacramentum »*, [in:] *Les Anténicéens*, vol. 1, Louvain-Paris 1924, p. 16–17.

²⁶ Cf. G. Hudon, *Les présupposés sacramentals de saint Léon le Grand*, « *Église et Théologie* » 10 (1979), p. 339–340.

²⁷ Sermon XXV, 2.

writings – it refers to God’s mercy on His people.²⁸ That is one of the reasons why Pope Leo is often perceived as the apostle and the proclaimer of God’s grace, which was revealed in the Mystery of the Incarnation.²⁹

With reference to Paul the Apostle (1 Tim 3: 16 and Phil) we can notice that Leo the Great does not separate these two mysteries, the Mystery of the Incarnation and the Resurrection, as “the Only-Begotten Son of God undertook by a single inclination of his majesty both the will to be born as a human being and the ability to be killed by human beings.”³⁰

2.2. The Self-Abatement of the Son of God

Saint Leo never stops praising the humble and at the same time sublime coming of the Lord. He particularly admires the Lord’s self-abatement, which brings His mercy to men. Raising man to God’s dignity (including the fact that God created man in his image), surprises him less than the fact that the Lord took on Him man’s nature and the form of a servant.³¹ Human sight would not have endured, had the Son of God revealed Himself in the full splendour of His majesty. To the same human nature to which it was said: “Thou art earth, and unto earth shalt thou go,” the following words were addressed: ‘sit Thou on My right hand.’” According to Leo a believer dwells “on nothing more frequently and more trustingly than on the fact that GOD the Son of GOD, begotten of the co-eternal Father, was also born by a human birth.”³²

Although in the times before the birth of Christ God bestowed numerous gifts upon mankind, the nativity of Jesus brought an even greater gift – mercy. Although in the form of a slave He was made man, both natures

²⁸ *Pietas* means “piety” or “devotion” to God, but can also be used to describe His attributes, namely love and mercy; cf. A. Guillaume, *Prière, jeûne et charité: des perspectives chrétiennes et une espérance pour notre temps*, Paris 1985, p. 67.

²⁹ Cf. Sermon XLVII (On Lent IX), 2.

³⁰ Sermon XXXVII (On the Feast of the Epiphany VII), 2; http://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20000804_leone-magno_en.html (11/09/2013).

³¹ Cf. Sermon XXIV, 1, p. 229.

³² Sermon XXVI, 1, p. 232.

retained their own proper character without loss³³: “the Word of GOD, Himself GOD, the Son of GOD who ‘in the beginning was with GOD,’ through whom ‘all things were made’ and ‘without’ whom ‘was nothing made (Jn 1 : 1–3),’ with the purpose of delivering man from eternal death, became man: so bending Himself to take on Him our humility without decrease in His own majesty, that remaining what He was and assuming what He was not, He might unite the true form of a slave to that form in which He is equal to GOD the Father, and join both natures together by such a compact that the lower should not be swallowed up in its exaltation nor the higher impaired by its new associate. Without detriment therefore to the properties of either substance which then came together in one person, majesty took on humility, strength weakness, eternity mortality.”³⁴

Pope Leo uses almost poetic metaphors to express the greatness of the mystery of the Nativity of Christ: “being invisible in His own nature He became visible in ours, and He whom nothing could contain, was content to be contained: abiding before all time He began to be in time: the LORD of all things, He obscured His immeasurable majesty and took on Him the form of a servant: being GOD, that cannot suffer, He did not disdain to be man that can, and immortal as He is, to subject Himself to the laws of death.”³⁵

The Incarnation was the only way of freeing men's minds taken captive by the devil from the abyss of death, as in order for the reconciliation with God to be possible “a Victim had to be offered for our atonement Who should be both a partner of our race and free from our contamination.”³⁶ This way all men of all times can attain salvation.

Celebrating the Nativity of the Saviour, we celebrate the beginning of our own lives as well: “For the birth of Christ is the source of life for Christian folk, and the birthday of the Head is the birthday of the body. [...] as the entire body of the faithful [...] is crucified with Christ in His passion, raised again in His resurrection, and placed at the Father's right

³³ Cf. Sermon XXIII, 2, p. 226.

³⁴ Sermon XXI, 2, p. 220.

³⁵ Sermon XXII, 2, p. 222.

³⁶ Sermon XXIII, 3, p. 227.

hand in His ascension, so with Him are they born in this nativity.”³⁷ We can therefore concur with God in the act of redemption, wanting what He wants, rejecting and condemning what He rejects and condemns, with the strength of His power and not our own.³⁸ That is what makes Christians “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own” (1 Pet 2:9), the foundation of which is Christ himself, the impregnable rock in which they were reborn through water and the Holy Ghost.³⁹ The birth of the Maker born of the Virgin’s womb Pope Leo compares to the rebirth of each believer in the sacrament of baptism, when “the power of the Most High and the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, which worked that Mary gave birth to the Saviour, also worked that water regenerate the believer.”⁴⁰

2.3. Adoration, Imitation and the Ongoing Growth in the Grace of the Lord’s Nativity

Apart from all the afore – mentioned topics that Pope Leo touched on in his sermons, at the end of each sermon he drew practical conclusions being indications for Christians’ lives. At the end of Sermon XXI he remarks that since Christians became partners in the Divine nature of Christ, they should refuse to return to the old baseness by degenerate conduct.⁴¹ He reminds that by the mystery of Baptism man was made a temple of the Holy Ghost and part of the Body the Head of which is Christ himself. That is why his actions should reflect the dignity to which he was raised. A Christian needs to adore and follow his Master, and subsequently raise in the mercy given to him through the Mystery of the Incarnation.

Verbs like *honorare*, *venerari*, *adorare* are used very often by Leo the Great with reference to Christ, reminding that every knee will bend at the sound of His name and, “et omnis lingua confiteatur quoniam Iesus in gloria est dei patris, indesinenter tamen ipsum partum salutiferae uirginis

³⁷ Sermon XXVI, 2, p. 233.

³⁸ Cf. *ibidem* 4, p. 234.

³⁹ Cf. Sermon XXIV, 6, p. 231.

⁴⁰ Sermon XXV, 4.

⁴¹ Cf. Sermon XXI, 3, p. 221.

adoramus, et illam uerbi et carnis indissolubilem copulam non minus suscipimus in praesepe iacentem, quam in throno paternae altitudinis consedentem.”⁴² The Incarnate Word is adored in the same way both on His Father’s right hand and in the manger. That is why Leo finishes his sermon with the following appeal: “**Honoretur** in infantia sua dominus, nec ad deitatis referantur iniuriam exordia et incrementa corporea, quoniam naturae incommutabili nec addidit aliquid natura nostra, nec minuit, sed qui in similitudinem carnis peccati dignatus est hominibus esse conformis, in unitate deitatis patri permanet aequalis, cum quo et cum spiritu sancto uiuit et regnat in saecula saeculorum.”⁴³

Adoration of the Lord is every believer’s task. Having discovered two Natures in the Lord, we should worship both the Word that became flesh in Christ and Man who became Christ In the Word.⁴⁴ Similarly, in the sermon on the Feast of the Epiphany, Leo mentions the wise men, who “adore the Word in flesh, the Wisdom in infancy, the Power in weakness, the LORD of majesty in the reality of man.”⁴⁵ Therefore, he observes that a holy day of Lord’s epiphany must be honoured not only with our faith, but our understanding as well.⁴⁶ In the same way that a star more brilliant than the other stars aroused wise men to the recognition and adoration of the King of heaven and earth,⁴⁷ the new Light will lead us to the adoration of God.⁴⁸

Following Paul the Apostle, Saint Leo compares the birth of Christ as the Head to the Mystery of the Incarnation as the birth from flesh and relates this comparison to all the people who have been baptised: “For the birth of Christ is the source of life for Christian folk, and the birthday of the Head is the birthday of the body. Although every individual that is called has his own order, and all the sons of the Church are separated from one another by intervals of time, yet as the entire body of the faithful

⁴² Sermon XXIX, 2.

⁴³ Ibidem, 3.

⁴⁴ Cf. Sermon XXX, 5.

⁴⁵ Sermon XXI, 2, p. 244.

⁴⁶ Cf. Sermon XXII, 2.

⁴⁷ Cf. Sermon XXXIII, 5, p. 246.

⁴⁸ Cf. Sermon XXXVI (On the Feast of the Epiphany VI), 1, p. 252.

being born in the font of baptism is crucified with Christ in His passion, raised again in His resurrection, and placed at the Father's right hand in His ascension, so with Him are they born in this nativity."⁴⁹

Every believer, as well as the Lord's People as a whole, is born from the mystery of the Incarnation, that is why we may profit from acts of salvation if we use the Lord's teachings revealed to us in mysteries in our everyday lives.⁵⁰ For we only develop spiritually in the Church if we learn from the works of our Lord, which have been offered to us as examples for imitation. Pope Leo reminds, that by the mystery of baptism man became the temple of the Holy Ghost and a member of the Body, the Head of which is Jesus Christ. Believer's conduct should reflect the dignity to which he was raised: "We should live in the humility and meekness of the Redeemer [...]. For in vein are we called Christians, if we are not imitators of Christ."⁵¹ The works of the Lord set an example for His disciples, who, having experienced God's great mercy, must be extremely careful not to be once more entangled in the errors which they have renounced.⁵² Believing in both the divinity and humanity of Christ we become true Christians, participate in the riches of His glory among the saints and regain the holy gift of infancy: "Consequently, dearly beloved, the whole learning of Christian wisdom consists not in abundance of words, not in cleverness at disputing, not in desire for praise and glory, but in a true and willing humility. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ chose and taught from within the womb of his Mother right up to his torment on the cross – by enduring everything with fortitude. When the disciples, as the Evangelist says, arguing among themselves as to "which one of them would be greater in the kingdom of heaven, [Jesus] called a little child and stood him in their midst and said: 'Amen, I say to you, unless you change yourselves and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever, therefore, humble themselves like this child will be the greater in the kingdom of heaven'" (Mt 18: 1–4). Christ loves the Childhood that he first took up in both soul and body. Christ loves childhood, the teacher

⁴⁹ Sermon XXVI, 2, p. 233.

⁵⁰ Cf. Sermon XXV, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 6.

⁵² Cf. Sermon XXVII, 4, p. 238.

of humility, the rule of innocence, the image of gentleness. Christ loves childhood, to which he directs the characters of older people, to which he brings back old age. Those whom he would raise up to an eternal kingdom he disposes to follow his own example.⁵³

Saint Leo concludes that the earliest encouragement to live in the state of infancy we can find is in the words of Paul the Apostle: "in respect to evil be like infants" (1 Cor 14:20). Leo instructs us that it is not the immaturity and imperfections of childhood that we should be trying to return to, but the gentleness of behaviour and purity of intentions so typical for the youngest: "Non ergo ad ludicra infantiae et ad imperfecta nobis primordia reuertendum est, sed aliquid quod etiam graues annos deceat, inde sumendum est: Velox commotionum transitus, citus ad pacem recursus, nulla memoria offensionis, nulla cupiditas dignitatis, amor sociae communionis, aequalitas naturalis. Magnum enim bonum est nocere non nosse et ad maligna non sapere, quia inferre ac referre iniuriam, mundi huius prudentia est, nemini autem malum pro malo reddere, christianae est aequanimitatis infantia."⁵⁴

Przemysł

REV. ARKADIUSZ JASIEWICZ

Summary

The Mystery of the Lord's Nativity in the Sermons of Leo the Great

Pope Leo the Great left a rich patrimony of letters and sermons, which were created as a result of his constant pastoral care for the community of Rome and for all the churches. The preserved collection contains about a hundred of sermons and about one hundred and fifty letters, all written in Latin. Among his sermons the ones that interest us the most are: on the Feast of the Nativity (11 sermons) and on the Feast of the Epiphany (8 sermons). On the basis of these source texts an attempt to elaborate on the main thoughts concerning the mystery of the Nativity is made. First the spiritual fruits of the

⁵³ Sermon XXXVII, 3; http://www.vatican.va/spirit/documents/spirit_20000804_le-one-magno_en.html.

⁵⁴ Sermon XXXVII, 4.

Mystery of Incarnation are discussed, then the Divine Mercy and lastly – the approach of the faithful to the mystery of the Lord's Nativity. Pope Leo summarises his teachings in the following way: "If we have recourse to that unutterable condescension of the Divine Mercy, whereby the Creator of men deigned to become man, by it we shall be raised to the nature of Him whom we adore in ours" (*Sermon VIII on the Nativity*).

Keywords

Nativity, mystery, humility, humbleness, light, joy

Streszczenie

Misterium Bożego Narodzenia w mowach św. Leona Wielkiego

Jednym z piewców misterium Bożego Narodzenia był papież, św. Leon Wielki. Znany dobrze działalność św. Leona dzięki jego przepięknym kazaniom – zachowało się ich niemal sto, zapisanych wspaniałą i jasną łaciną, oraz dzięki jego listom – ok. stu pięćdziesięciu. Wśród jego kazań znajdujemy te, które najbardziej nas interesują: na Narodzenie Pańskie (11 mów) i na Objawienie Pańskie (8 mów). Z tego materiału źródłowego staram się przybliżyć główne myśli naszego autora dotyczące misterium Bożego Narodzenia. Najpierw zatrzymuję się na duchowych owocach Tajemnicy Wcielenia, następnie ukazuje przyjście Pana jako objawienie się Miłosierdzia Bożego, a przy końcu wskazuję na postawę, jaką człowiek powinien zająć wobec tajemnicy Bożego Narodzenia. Tak streszcza swoją naukę: „Uciekając się bowiem znowu do miłosierdzia Bożego – co w tak niewysłowny sposób ku nam zstąpiło, że Stwórca ludzi zechciał stać się człowiekiem – poznajemy siebie w Tym, któremu Boską część oddajemy” (*Na Narodzenie Pańskie 8*).

Słowa kluczowe

Boże Narodzenie, misterium, pokora, uniżenie, światłość, radość

TOMASZ MARIA DĄBEK OSB

“When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him” (Mt 1 : 24). Discreet, Effective Service

The paper prepared to commemorate the jubilee of rev. prof. Józef Kozyra will be dedicated to his patron – Saint Joseph, focusing on his discreet and effective service and devotion to Jesus and His Mother Mary. The Gospels mention Joseph relatively rarely. They never quote any of his words, but they talk about his works, fulfilling God’s will, overcoming his own fears and his constant presence by Mary’s side in order to take care of her and her child and, with no pompous words but by his everyday actions, express his feelings of love.

Saint Matthew indicates that Joseph, Mary’s husband, was a righteous man (Mt 1 : 19) and a devout Israelite. The Jubilarian wrote a great commentary on the Letter of James. The inspired author clearly defines the rules of life and behaviour of the disciple of Christ, who is a part of God’s people, by Saint Paul referred to as the Israel of God (Gal 6 : 16). This paper aims at presenting all the ways in which Joseph fulfilled the requirements presented in James’ Letter.

1. Saint Joseph followed all God’s commands

The Gospel according to Matthew talks about all the difficulties that Joseph had to face when he discovered that his beloved, whom he was officially betrothed to and was supposed to take into his home in a few

months time, was found with child: “Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us.’ When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus” (Mt 1 : 18–25).

Joseph became betrothed to Mary as a young man, he was probably between 18 and 24 years old.¹ In art he is often depicted as an old man, following the apocrypha, which in this way attempted to emphasise the more probable, as it seemed, virginity of Mary, which an older, more experienced man with fewer temptations to overcome helped her guard.²

The young husband struggled inside. He was a righteous man (δίκαιος – Mt 1 : 19), he respected the law of Israel given by God to the Chosen People, however, he did not want to expose his wife to shame, and that is why he decided to divorce her quietly, with no trial.³ In the opinion of

¹ Cf. J. Gnlika, *Das Matthäusevangelium, Teil 1: Kommentar zu Kap. 1, 1–13*, 58, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1986, p. 17 (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 1). On the subject of different stages of the process of getting married in Palestine in the time of Christ cf. R. Bartnicki, *Będą dwoje jednym ciałem. Małżeństwo w świetle Nowego Testamentu*, Warszawa 2007, p. 14–23.

² Cf. *Protoewangelia Jakuba*, IX, 2, [in:] *Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu*, pod red. M. Starowieyskiego, Lublin 1986², p. 191f.

³ Cf. P. Włodyga, *Józef, mąż sprawiedliwy*, [w:] *Diligis me? Pasce. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Biskupowi Sandomierskiemu Wacławowi Józefowi Świerzawskiemu na pięćdziesięciolecie świeceń kapłańskich 1949–1999*, red. S. Czerwik, M. Mierzwa, Sandomierz

many people he himself might have seemed to be an inconsiderate man, who had relations with a woman betrothed to him before taking her into his house, and later abandoned her when she was with child.

God, seeing his righteousness and his internal struggle, instructed him in his dream what he should do. He appointed him to be the caretaker of His Incarnate Son and His Mother. Joseph did exactly what the angel of the Lord had commanded him (Mt 1:24f.), he resigned from relations with his wife, which had to be a huge sacrifice for him. However, being a young, righteous and responsible man, he was able to control himself and with his devout life he fulfilled his mission discreetly and with love.⁴

The Evangelist mentions Mary's virginity before Joseph took her to his house and before the birth of Jesus. However, he does not say if the two had normal marriage relations after that, the Greek expression used does not explain that clearly. Joseph, as a legal guardian of the child, is supposed to give him the name announced in Isa 7:14, meaning the constant presence of God among people.⁵

1999, vol. 1, p. 297–309; M. Wolniewicz, *Święty Józef w Ewangelii*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” 71 (1978) vol. 109 no. 1 (414), p. 26–29.

⁴ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza*, wstęp, przekł. z oryginału, komentarz oprac. J. Homerski, Poznań-Warszawa 1979, p. 76–84 (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu, 3.1); *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–13*, wstęp, przekł. z oryg., koment. A. Paciorek, Częstochowa 2005, p. 91–98 (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament, 1); D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Collegeville, Minnesota 1991, p. 34–40 (Sacra Pagina Series, 1); J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 15–22; R. Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ. Vérité de Noël au-delà des mythes. Exégèse et sémiotique, historicité et théologie*, Paris 1982, p. 319–323; J. Łach, *Dziecię się nam narodziło. W kręgu teologii Ewangelii dziecięstwa Jezusa*, Częstochowa 2001, p. 28–49; M. Wolniewicz, *Święty Józef w Ewangelii*, op. cit., p. 23–26. 29–31. A French thinker J. Guitton had a number of beautiful comments concerning Saint Joseph and his life with Mary. He talked about his image of the couple, the virtues that in his opinion Joseph possessed and which, as a result, earned him the title of a ‘righteous man’ (cf. J. Guitton, *The Virgin Mary*, New York 1952).

⁵ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza*, op. cit., p. 73f., 76–84; *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–13*, op. cit., p. 85f., 91–103; J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 10f. 16–33; D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, op. cit., p. 29f., 34–40;

Giving a name to Jesus was an important duty for Joseph, which he fulfilled as he had been commanded by God. Joseph acts as a legal father of the child, the son of David, the son of Abraham, through whom all the inheritance rights and privileges of the family of David are conveyed, he introduces Jesus to God's First Covenant People.⁶ Saint Matthew describes the event with the following words: "He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him (ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα) Jesus" (Mt 1:25; Lk 2:21 mentions circumcision and giving a name, without indicating who did it; he uses passive voice – "he was named Jesus, the name given him" – ἐκλήθη τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ).

During the Annunciation Mary is presented in Lk 1:27 as "a virgin (παρθένος) betrothed (ἐμνηστευμένη) to a man named Joseph." It is a description of a normal situation of the first stage of marriage in Israel, the betrothal, obliging to fidelity during the time preceding the moment of bringing the bride to the house of the bridegroom (cf. Mt 25:1–13), after which their regular married life was to begin. Mary's words during the Annunciation: "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" (Lk 1:34) are understandable (and necessary), if she had decided, despite the common custom of the times and against the common social practice, to preserve her virginity even in marriage.

Many contemporary authors claim that both Mary and Joseph had a normal relationship in mind when they decided to marry: Joseph had hoped for offspring, Mary never took a vow of chastity. According to Wolniewicz, the claim that Mary initiated Joseph into her decision of keeping virginity and persuaded him to participate in her plan is unsubstantiated. He claims that it was God who appointed her to be the Mother of his only Son and, therefore, let her preserve virginity.⁷

A. Jankowski, *Blżej Bogarodzicy. Studia z mariologii biblijnej*, Kraków 2004, p. 41–45 (Myśl Teologiczna, 43).

⁶ Cf. M. Wolniewicz, *Święty Józef w Ewangelii*, op. cit., p. 22f. 30f.

⁷ Cf. ibidem, p. 26. S. Harežga thinks that Mary's problem does not suggest having taken the vow of chastity, he claims that it proves her perpetual virginity (*post factum* – he refers to the work of J. Mc Hugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, Doubleday Books 1975) preserved thanks to the intervention of God through the works of the Holy Spirit; cf. *Małżeństwo Maryi i Józefa*, „Salvatoris Mater” 11 (2009) no. 3 (43), p. 15.

If we keep in mind the fact that Mary herself was immaculately conceived, she was the favoured one (κεχαριτωμένη – Lk 1:28), free from the effect of sin⁸, could see things more clearly and suffered no weakness of will (cf. Rom 7:14–25), it is easier to assume that through her virginity she wanted to devote herself to God completely, and most probably Joseph accepted this situation, so different from the normal unity of partners marriage offers to the betrothed. If Mary had intended to lead a standard married life, her observation that she “has no relations with a man” would not have been an obstacle of any kind, as she would have started having them after the second stage of her marriage (being brought to the home of the bridegroom – Joseph). Jesus would have been conceived as a child of two human parents. Jankowski suggests that this particular question implies some other decision made by Mary, a kind of commitment only known to God.⁹

Matthew enumerates further instructions given to Joseph in his dream and describes the events after the visit of the magi from the east: “When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.’ Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod” (Mt 2:13–15). Joseph did what he had been commanded to do. He provided Jesus and His Mother with safe environment and conditions to live and grow up in. The Gospels do not mention any details of the life of the Holy Family in Egypt. They probably resided among modest Israelites, making the work of their hands their source of income.¹⁰

When the dangers in the Holy Land passed, the return became possible: “When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in

⁸ Cf. A. Jankowski, *Bliżej Bogarodzicy*, op. cit., p. 46–49.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

¹⁰ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza*, op. cit., p. 92–95; *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–13*, op. cit., p. 120–122; D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, op. cit., p. 44; J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., 47–51; R. Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ...*, op. cit., p. 328; J. Łach, *Dziecię się nam narodziło*, op. cit., p. 71–76.

a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead.' He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, *He shall be called a Nazorean*" (Mt 2: 19–23).¹¹

Joseph's active obedience in faith is an example of what James will later write about the faith shown in works: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. [...] Do you want proof, you ignoramus, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works. Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called 'the friend of God.' See how a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by a different route? For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (Jas 2: 14–17. 20–26).¹² Joseph, with his works, proves to be one the witnesses and executors of the Old Testament faith.

¹¹ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza*, op. cit., p. 97–100; *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–13*, op. cit., p. 124–126; D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, op. cit., p. 45f.; J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 54–57; R. Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ...*, op. cit., p. 330–333; J. Łach, *Dziecię się nam narodziło*, op. cit., p. 79–82.

¹² Cf. *List świętego Jakuba*, wstęp, przekł. z oryg., koment. J. Kozyra, Częstochowa 2011, p. 152–172 (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament, 16); *Die Jakobusbrief*, Auslegung von F. Mussner, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1975³, p. 127–151 (Herders Theologischer Kommentar

2. By the side of the handmaid of the Lord and her Son

Saint Joseph is always mentioned in connection with Mary, Mother of Jesus, whom he was legally married to. That is why we encounter his name in the genealogy of Christ (Mt 1:1–16). Another version in Lk 3:23–38 can be the genealogy of Mary, if she was the inheriting daughter and her rights were passed on to Joseph as the rights of the son of her father, who, according to Lk 3:23f., could have been Heli, the son of Matthat.¹³

In the Infancy Narrative Joseph is present by Mary’s side. Luke gives most detailed descriptions of this situation, e.g. when he talks about the trip to Nazareth connected with the decree concerning the census: “And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Lk 2:4–7). Joseph took his wife with him, very near her delivery date, and did what he could to provide her with the best possible conditions, since there was no room for them even in the inn, which was an enclosure with no provisions where a traveler could drive his cattle into for the night or rest in. He took her to an outside cave, which was normally used as a stable, and tried his best to make her feel comfortable there.¹⁴

zum Neuen Testament, 13.1); *Listy Katolickie. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, oprac. F. Gryglewicz, Poznań 1959, p. 87–96 (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu, 11); L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, New York 1995, p. 237–252 (Anchor Bible, 37A).

¹³ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, wstęp, przekł. z oryg., komentarz oprac. F. Gryglewicz, Poznań-Warszawa 1974, p. 126 (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu, 3.3); H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Teil 1: *Kommentar zu Kap. 1, 1–9, 50*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1969, p. 199f. (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 3); J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9: 20*, Dallas 1989, p. 171 (Word Biblical Commentary, 35A).

¹⁴ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, op. cit., p. 102–104; H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 99–106; J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9: 20*, op. cit., p. 103–106;

The shepherds around whom the glory of the Lord shone were informed by the angel that a saviour has been born for them who is Messiah and Lord (cf. Lk 2, 10–12): “So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger” (Lk 2:16). The Child was surrounded with His closest relatives and their love – Joseph was taking care of his wife and her newborn Baby Jesus.¹⁵

The Holy Family tried to follow the law of the Lord devoutly. Saint Luke mentions the eight days after which, according to the law in Lev 12:3, the flesh of the boy’s foreskin should be circumcised. He also describes the Presentation of Jesus at the temple, connected with the ritual purification of His Mother on day forty after giving birth to a boy (cf. Lev 12:1–8) and the Consecration of Jesus as a first-born that opens the womb (Lk 2:22–24; Ex 13:2, 12, 15; cf. Lev 5:7; 12:8). Luke does not indicate the person who named the Child (Lk 2:21), which can indirectly emphasise the special role of Mary in the process, similarly to Elizabeth’s role when giving the name to John the Baptist. All the activities connected with going to the temple are also performed by ‘them’ – Mary and Joseph. The pericope begins with the following words: “When the days were completed for their purification” (Lk 2:22), which resulted from the fact that the subject of the main sentence was plural (“they took him”), although the process of purification concerned the Mother only. However, the consecration of Jesus is not mentioned directly, which by some is interpreted as proof that Jesus belonged to God all the time and became blood Sacrifice for Him thirty-odd years later. They made ‘the sacrifice of the poor’: “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons” (Lk 2:24), which is consistent with

Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–11*, wstęp, przekł. z oryg., komentarz F. Mickiewicz, Częstochowa 2011, p. 160–166 (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament, 3); *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, introduction, translation, and notes by J. A. Fitzmyer, Garden City, New York 1981, p. 393–395, 399–407 (Anchor Bible, 28).

¹⁵ Cf. *Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–11*, op. cit., p. 173f.; H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 116; J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9*: 20, op. cit., p. 109; *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, op. cit., p. 397, 412.

the circumstances of Christ’s birth, when “there was no room for them in the inn” (Lk 2:7).¹⁶

Luke shortly describes the life of the Holy Family that followed: “When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (Lk 2:39f.).

Saint Luke is the only one who describes the last known event from Jesus’ life before his public activity: staying behind in the temple in Jerusalem and finding Him (Lk 2:41–50). The Holy Family lived according to the custom: each year they went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. As the author of the entry for the Biblical Dictionary notices, this fact partly indicates that Mary did not have other children, as some Protestants claim. If she had had to take care of a few (half a dozen, as this author suggests) small children, she would not have been able to participate in the feast.¹⁷

In Jerusalem the Mother and her husband were saddened by the disappearance of their Son, but also by His reaction when they finally found Him after a few days, which showed that for Him other things were more important than the family bonds. Mary is the only one who addresses Jesus: “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety” (Lk 2:48). She mentions Joseph first not only because of the patriarchal structure of her family, but also as a loving and caring wife. Mary did not understand everything immediately and needed time to become ready to participate in her Son’s Sacrifice. Luke finishes the Infancy Narrative with the following words: “He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man” (Lk 2, 51f.). Jesus was obedient to

¹⁶ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, op. cit., p. 108f.; *Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–11*, op. cit., p. 179–196; H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 82. 119–122; J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9: 20*, op. cit., p. 110. 117f.; *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, op. cit., p. 419–421. 423–426; R. Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l’enfance du Christ...*, op. cit., p. 239–246; J. Łach, *Dziecię się nam narodziło*, op. cit., p. 165–169.

¹⁷ J. Blinzler, *Herrenbrüder*, [in:] *Bibel-Lexikon*, red. H. Haag, Leipzig 1970, 721.

his family and Mary considered everything she had participated in, in order to be able to experience her unity with God and participation in the mission of her Son, and later share it with his disciples.¹⁸

Apart from the fragments of the Gospel in which Joseph is mentioned straightforwardly, there are many others which present him as a person indirectly, talking about the life of the Holy Family which for Jesus was an important stage that prepared Him for His future mission, and the huge educational role Joseph had in the process, legally acting as Jesus' father.¹⁹

The supportive role of Joseph by the side of Mary and Her Son can be compared to the mission of the Advocate that Jesus mentions talking to His disciples: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth" (Jn 14 : 16f.).²⁰ In the First Covenant the Spirit of God gave the chosen ones the power to act for the sake of the People of the Lord²¹, in the New Covenant Joseph,

¹⁸ Cf. *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, op. cit., p. 113–115; idem, *Dwunastoletni Jezus (Łk 2, 41–52)*, [w:] *Studium Scripturae anima theologiae. Prace ofiarowane Księdzu Profesorowi Stanisławowi Grzybkowi*, red. J. Chmiel, T. Matras, Kraków 1990, p. 80–93; *Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza*, part 1: *Rozdziały 1–11*, op. cit., p. 197–205; H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Teil 1, op. cit., p. 131–140; J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9 : 20*, op. cit., p. 123. 128–135; *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, op. cit., p. 432. 434–448; R. Laurentin, *Les évangiles de l'enfance du Christ...*, op. cit., p. 256–265; J. Łach, *Dziecię się nam narodziło*, op. cit., p. 179–181.

¹⁹ Cf. Brat Efraim, *Józef, ojciec na nowe tysiąclecie*, tłum. J. Rozkrut, Kraków 1998; P. Ostański, *Ukryte życie Jezusa Chrystusa Jego misteria w świetle apokryfów, Talmudu, świadectw buddyjskich i Pisma Świętego*, [in:] *Więcej szczęścia jest w dawaniu niżeli w braniu. Księga pamiątkowa dla Księdza Profesora Waldemara Chrostowskiego w 60. Rocznicę urodzin*, red. B. Strzałkowska, Warszawa 2011, vol. 3, p. 1146–1164, and 1157–1164 (*Ad Multos Annos*, 15).

²⁰ About the constant presence of the Holy Spirit as the basis of some of His functions and works towards the disciples, the Church and the whole world I wrote in the article: *Przywołany – Posłany – Obecny. Bogactwo misji Ducha Parakleta obecnego wśród uczniów Jezusa na podstawie J 14–16*, "Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny" 60 (2007) no. 1, p. 17–28.

²¹ Cf. e.g. Gen 41:38; Ex 3:3; 35:31; Num 27:18; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6. 19; 15:14; 1 Sam 10: 6. 10; 11: 6; 16: 13; 2 Chr 15: 1; 20: 14; 24: 20; Isa 11: 2; 42: 1;

overlooked and guided by God, took care of the Incarnate Son of God and His Mother, preparing Him for His future mission.

The Gospels do not mention Joseph during the period of public activity of Jesus. He was probably dead. Having fulfilled his task, he joined God in His heavenly grace, together with Jesus, whom he had been legally a father for, and Mary, whom he had taken care of as his wife.

3. Silence, discreetness

The Gospels never quote Joseph's words. In silence he did everything he had been commanded to do and when he spoke, he spoke with the words of a simple, righteous man, which expressed his noble feelings and intentions in such a straightforward manner, that there was no need to write them down. Inner balance, consistency and silence help us avoid the sins of the tongue, which James focuses on in the Letter explained and commented on by the Jubilarian: “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, his religion is vain. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world” (Jas 1 : 26f.).

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you realize that we will be judged more strictly, for we all fall short in many respects. If anyone does not fall short in speech, he is a perfect man, able to bridle his whole body also. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we also guide their whole bodies. It is the same with ships: even though they are so large and driven by fierce winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot's inclination wishes. In the same way the tongue is a small member and yet has great pretensions. Consider how small a fire can set a huge forest ablaze. The tongue is also a fire. It exists among our members as a world of malice, defiling the whole body and setting the entire course of our lives on fire, itself set on fire by Gehenna. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, but no human being can tame

the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. This need not be so, my brothers. Does a spring gush forth from the same opening both pure and brackish water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, produce olives, or a grapevine figs? Neither can salt water yield fresh. Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show his works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom” (Jas 3 : 1–13).²²

Saint Joseph can be the patron saint of everyone who tries to fulfil God’s will in a discreet and persistent manner (cf. Jas 1 : 3f.)²³ and who aims at working on controlling their tongues. He combines discreetness, temperance and acts of love that are mentioned in Jas 1 : 27; 3 : 13: taking care of the ones who need it, in his case his immediate family – the Child who had no other father on earth, and the works done with the gentleness attributed to wisdom. Through his actions Joseph presents himself as a righteous man, not only by following the Law of Moses, but also by living a life of love and fairness.

Encouraging us to pray for the sick, the author of the Letter teaches us how great the value of the prayer of such a man is: “pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful. Elijah was a human being like us; yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain upon the land” (Jas 5 : 16–18).²⁴

²² Cf. *List świętego Jakuba*, op. cit., p. 178–190. 192f.; *Die Jakobusbrief*, op. cit., p. 110–114. 159–170; *Listy Katolickie*, op. cit., p. 74–77. 96–106; L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, op. cit., p. 210–214. 253–270.

²³ The inspired author talks about the correlation between the trial of one’s faith and the perseverance (ὑπομονήν) that it brings. Cf. *List świętego Jakuba*, op. cit., p. 71f.; *Die Jakobusbrief*, op. cit., p. 65–67; *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, op. cit., p. 54; L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, op. cit., p. 178. More on the subject of perseverance in Stanisław Pisarek’s: *Cierpliwa wytrwałość. „Hypomonē” „Hypoménein” w Nowym Testamencie*, Katowice 1992. The author talks about the patient perseverance in the Letter of James on pp. 207–229, he mentions 1 : 3f. on pp. 215–218.

²⁴ Cf. *List świętego Jakuba*, op. cit., p. 290–296; *Die Jakobusbrief*, op. cit., p. 226–230; *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, op. cit., p. 137–139; L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, op. cit., p. 335–337.

The prayer of the righteous Joseph is of great value, which is why we commend our Jubilarian to his spiritual care, as well as everyone else who aims at leading the life of righteousness, following Joseph’s example of how to be discreet and persistently devout and, as the Letter of James teaches us, be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath and be doers of the word and not hearers only (cf. Jas 1 : 19. 22).

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Summary

“When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him” (Mt 1 : 24). Discreet, Effective Service

Saint Joseph was a righteous man. He respected the Law of Israel. The decision to divorce Mary after she was found with child was not an easy one, although he knew he was not the child’s father. Instructed by the angel of the Lord, he took her to his home, gave a name to her child as his legal guardian (Mt 1 : 18–25), took care of his wife and her child, organised their trip to Egypt (Mt 2 : 13–15), then their return to Palestine and life in Nazareth (Mt 2 : 19–23; cf. Lk 2 : 39–52). His active obedience to God is the fulfilment of all the things Saint James will later describe as faith shown by the works of the faithful (Jas 2 : 14–17. 20–26). Joseph is put among those who bear witness to the faith of the Old Testament. The Gospels give no account of his exact words, although he fulfilled everything that he had been commanded. Saint Joseph can be a patron of everyone who tries to fulfil God’s will in a discreet and effective manner, with perseverance produced by faith (cf. Jas 1 : 3f.). With his works and life he shows how to bridle your tongue (cf. Jas 1 : 26f.; 3 : 1–13) and take care of the ones that need it the most (cf. Jas 1 : 27; 3 : 13), discreetly fulfilling your duties.

Keywords

Saint Joseph, justice, humility, obedience, service, perseverance, silence, discreetness

More on the subject of silence and moderation in speech in one of my works: „*W ciszy i ufności leży wasza siła*” (Iz 30, 15). *Nauka Biblii o milczeniu i powściągliwości*, Kraków 2006.

Streszczenie

„Zbudziwszy się ze snu, Józef uczynił tak, jak mu polecił anioł Pański” (Mt 1, 24). Dyskretna, skuteczna służba

Św. Józef był człowiekiem sprawiedliwym, szanował Prawo Izraela. Przeżywał wewnętrzne rozterki, gdy dowiedział się, że jego Oblubienica oczekuje Dziecka, którego nie był ojcem. Pouczony przez anioła, przyjął Ją do siebie, nadał imię Jej Dziecku jako Jego prawny ojciec (Mt 1, 18–25), opiekował się Małżonką i Dzieckiem, zorganizował podróż do Egiptu (Mt 2, 13–15), potem powrót do Palestyny i życie w Nazarecie (Mt 2, 19–23; por. Łk 2, 39–52). Jego czynne posłuszeństwo płynące z wiary jest wypełnieniem tego, co później napisze o wierze ukazującej się przez czyny św. Jakub (Jk 2, 14–17. 20–26). Św. Józef staje w szeregu świadków i wykonawców wiary Starego Testamentu. Ewangelie nie podają żadnego jego słowa. W milczeniu wypełniał wszystko, co do niego należało. List św. Jakuba wskazuje na niebezpieczeństwa płynące ze złego używania języka (Jk 1, 26n; 3, 1–13). Św. Józef może być patronem wszystkich, którzy starają się dyskretnie, wytrwale wśród przeciwności (por. Jk 1, 3n) i skutecznie pełnić wolę Bożą oraz pracować nad opanowaniem swego języka. Łączy dyskrecję, wstrzemięźliwość w mowie z czynami miłości, o których mówi Jk 1, 27; 3, 13, opiekę nad potrzebującymi, w tym wypadku nad swymi Najbliższymi, nad Dzieckiem, które nie miało naturalnego ziemskiego ojca, oraz uczynki spełniane z łagodnością właściwą mądrości. Modlitwa takiego człowieka posiada wielką moc, zgodnie ze słowami Jk 5, 16–18. Naśladujmy dyskrecję i wytrwałą wierność św. Józefa, starajmy się jak on być bardziej chętni do słuchania, a mniej skłonni do mówienia i wprowadzać w czyn usłyszane słowo Boże (por. Jk 1, 19. 22).

Słowa kluczowe

Św. Józef, sprawiedliwość, pokora, posłuszeństwo, służba, wytrwałość, milczenie, dyskrekcja

REV. JANUSZ WILK

The Economy of Salvation According to 2 Tim 1 : 9–10

The title of this paper combines two terms: economy and salvation. Their correlation in contemporary speech may seem unusual, or even breaching the rules of different realities of human existence. Yet, the Greek term οἰκονομία, which currently means “economy” (careful, thrifty management of available resources or the definition of science concerning the production, trade and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money) is composed of two notions: οἶκος (“house”) and νόμος (“law,” “rule”). This lexeme is understood as: “keeping the house,” “management,” but also “making a plan,” “programme.”¹ In this sense it can form an expression “the economy of salvation,” since it refers to: “managing salvation,” “the plan of salvation” or “the programme of salvation.” The fragment of 2 Tim 1 : 9–10 is “a compendium” of knowledge about salvation. The words were addressed to Timothy, one of Paul’s closest associates, who, at his command, stayed in Ephesus in order to prevent heresy from infecting the church in Ephesus and establish Elders and Deacons there.

Timothy, being responsible for the Christians in Ephesus, had to face difficulties which made his work of the superior of the church extremely challenging. There were two reasons for this situation. The first one di-

¹ Cf. οἰκονομία, [in:] R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu. Wydanie z pełną lokalizacją greckich haseł, kluczem polsko-greckim oraz indeksem form czasownikowych*, Warszawa 1995², p. 422; *Słownik grecko-polski*, red. Z. Abramowiczówna, Warszawa 1962, vol. 3, p. 250.

rectly connected with Timothy himself. He was a relatively young (cf. 1 Tim 4:12) and sensitive man (cf. 1 Cor 16:10–11), who was assigned the position of the head of the local church. He also suffered from some health problems (cf. 1 Tim 5:23). The other problem lied in the community itself, since false teachers, who were a part of it, and through their “profane, idle talk” (cf. 1 Tim 4:1–11; 6:3–10; 2 Tim 2:16–19; 4:3) had a negative influence on the members of the community, as well as the position of Saint Paul and his beloved follower – Timothy.

These two factors were, among others, the reason why the Second Epistle to Timothy was created. In the Epistle the author tried to strengthen the young bishop of Ephesus. With this goal in mind he placed in the Epistle a liturgical couplet (cf. 2 Tim 1:9–10), touching on three issues: the fact that God saved us and called us to a holy life (cf. 9a); the salvation of man according to God’s own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ before time began (cf. 9b) and bringing life and immortality to light through the Gospel (cf. 10).² The text is the summary of the Gospel,³ although most probably not a complete one.⁴ The analogy with Rom 16:25–27 and Eph 1:3–11 suggests that it is a liturgical or catechetical creed, which was incorporated in 2 Tim. However, there is no introductory formula (like e.g. in 2 Tim 2:11: πιστὸς ὁ λόγος – “this saying is trustworthy”), which would assure the reader as to the righteousness and veracity of this utterance. What is more, a strong connection between verse 9 and 10 with the words from 2 Tim 1:6–14 and the vocabulary similar to 2 Tm, might

² Cf. H. Langkammer, *Listy Pasterskie. Pierwszy list do Tymoteusza. Drugi list do Tymoteusza. List do Tytusa. Tłumaczenie, wstęp i komentarz*, Lublin 2006, p. 96 (Biblia Lubelska).

³ Cf. L. Oberlinner, *Zweiter Timotheusbrief*, [in:] idem, *Der erste Timotheusbrief. Der zweite Timotheusbrief*, Freiburg im Breisgau-Basel-Wien 2002, p. 37 (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. Ungekürzte Sonderausgabe): “Summariums des apostolischen Kerygmas”; P. H. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles*, Sheffield 1989, p. 94 (Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series, 34): “a capsule summary of the gospel of salvation.”

⁴ Cf. G. D. Fee, *Comentario de las Epístolas a 1ª y 2ª de Timoteo y Tito*, traducción P. L. Gómez Flores, Viladecavalls (Barcelona) 2008, p. 266 (Estudios Bíblicos, 23).

indicate that the author of this description of God's works is the author of the Epistle himself.⁵ There is no unanimous opinion on that matter, although in different writings the most common hypothesis is that the author of 2 Tim included this early – Christian creed in his letter as an interpretation of the Gospel presented in verse 8.

1. Context

The couplet 2 Tim 1:9–10 is a part of the pericope the main theme of which is perseverance in the service for the sake of the Gospel (cf. 2 Tim 1:6–2:13). The immediate context (cf. 2 Tim 1:6–14) is a call for the persistence in giving testimony to the Lord, the example of which are the works of Saint Paul himself. Verse 6, which initiates the pericope, mentions the key task Timothy has been given in the context of his own formation – stirring into flame the gift of God (ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ). This gift is the grace resulting from the conferral of an ecclesiastical office (cf. also 1 Tim 4:14). It can also refer to the Holy Spirit. The interpretation of the formula τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ as a reference to the Holy Spirit is supported by verse 7 and Acts 8:17; 19:6.⁶ The formula, apart from the office and the Holy Spirit, partly refers to the specific mission of Timothy, which was the continuation of Saint Paul's mission and preaching, that he took over after him. The entrusted gift should be guarded by Timothy with the help of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Tim 1:13–14). All these interpretations of the τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ formula emphasise the fact that the entrusted gift must be taken care of and its strength needs to be revived, which was expressed in verse 6 by the use

⁵ Cf. I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Edinburgh 1999, p. 700 (The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments).

⁶ Cf. P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, Grand Rapids-Michigan-Cambridge 2006, p. 458 (The New International Commentary on the New Testament).

of an extremely dynamic verb ἀναζωπυρέω (“stir into flame”; “revive”) (*hapax legomenon* of the New Testament).⁷

Verse 8, logically connected to verse 7 by the conjunction γάρ (“for”) indicates the way in which Timothy needs to stir God’s gift into flame – that is by not being ashamed of his testimony to the Lord, nor of Saint Paul, a prisoner for his sake (v. 8a) and bearing his share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God (v. 8b). The encouragement to accept the suffering (συγκακοπαθέω) may refer to future martyrdom,⁸ or, what seems to be more likely, refer to the hardship connected with the faithful works for the sake of the Gospel.⁹

Verse 9 and 10 that this paper focuses on, are the articulation of the Gospel for the sake of which Timothy should accept the suffering. The formula εἰς ὃ (“for which”) (v. 11) – referring to τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (v. 10) – connects verse 11 and 12 to the thought included in verse 9 and 10. The two following verses (13–14), being the last two of the immediate context of 2 Tim 1:9–10, are the continuation of the comments included in verse 6 and 8. They synthetically present the requirements set for Timothy as Paul’s protege (v. 13) responsible for the entrusted deposit of faith (v. 14).

The analysis of the immediate context of 2 Tim 1:9–10 indicates the semantic and thematic integrity of this couplet with the whole pericope 2 Tim 1:6–14. Not only does it present its main theme (faithfulness and perseverance in the ministry of the gospel), but also provides the reader with a detailed explanation of what the Gospel, for the sake of which one should accept the suffering either in the form of martyrdom or in the form of constant, arduous effort to proclaim the news of the redemption from sin and the salvation of man, in fact is.

⁷ The dynamism of the verb ἀναζωπυρέω is well presented in LXX, in which it was used twice (see: Gen 45: 26–27; 1 Macc 13:7), always in the context of revival and stirring into flame (ἀνεζωπύρησεν τὸ πνεῦμα).

⁸ Cf. G. Holtz, *Die Pastoralbriefe*, Berlin 1980³, p. 156 (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament, 13).

⁹ Cf. N. Casalini, *Parole alla Chiesa. La tradizione paolina nelle Lettere Pastorali*, Milano 2009, p. 236 (Analecta. Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, 71).

2. Structure

Grammatically 2 Tim 1:9–10 is a part of a Greek sentence forming verses 8–11. In the theological sense, the couplet constitutes an independent thematic unit the structure of which can be clearly (although it is not as symmetrical as in 1 Tim 3:16 or 2 Tim 2:11–13) seen in 2 Tim 1:6–14. The structure of 2 Tim 1:9–10 has a logical sequence:¹⁰

I.

[θεοῦ] τοῦ σώσαντος ἡμᾶς
καὶ καλέσαντος κλήσει ἅγια,
οὐ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ἡμῶν
ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἰδίαν πρόθεσιν καὶ χάριν,

II.

τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν
[A] ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
[B] πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων,
φανερωθεῖσαν δὲ
[B'] νῦν
[A'] διὰ τῆς ἐπιφανείας
τοῦ σωτήρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ,

III.

καταργήσαντος μὲν τὸν θάνατον
φωτίσαντος δὲ ζωὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν
διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

As the schematic structure of the text shows, it was built on three sets of thematically connected participles: I. σώσαντος (“saved”) – καλέσαντος (“called”); II. δοθεῖσαν (“bestowed”) – φανερωθεῖσαν (“made” [manifest through]); III. καταργήσαντος (“destroyed”) – φωτίσαντος (“brought” [to light]). The first one, referring to θεοῦ (v. 8b) describes the initiative

¹⁰ Cf. I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles*, op. cit., p. 701.

of the salvific works of God. It is the main theme of the whole couplet, which is specified in its two successive parts. The second set of participles is connected with χάριν (v. 9b). Part II, the expression of which was shown by chiasmic symmetry, describes two stages of the history of salvation: the first stage – πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων (lit. “before eternity”), in which God initiated the salvation of man (part I) and the second stage – νῦν (“now”), in which he accomplished the plan of salvation through the incarnation, passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The last two participles, referring to τοῦ σωτήρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (v. 10a), first describe the negative (καταργήσαντος – “destroyed”) and then the positive (φωτίσαντος – “brought” [to light]) aspects of the incarnation of Christ.

The thematic structure of 2 Tim 1:9–10 touches on the following issues: part I – God as man’s saviour; salvation as the result of God’s grace and not won by personal deeds; part II – the central position of Jesus Christ in the work of salvation and the aspect of time; part III – the presentation of the consequences of the work of salvation fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

The structure of 2 Tim 1:9–10 corresponds with Eph 2:8–9. Both texts share a common parenthesis and both emphasise God’s grace in the salvation of man.¹¹

3. Detailed Analysis

v. 9a

[θεοῦ] τοῦ σώσαντος ἡμᾶς καὶ καλέσαντος κλήσει ἅγια

[God]. He saved us and called us to a holy life

This phrase is connected with verse 8, in which the author of the Letter encourages Timothy to continue bearing his share of hardship for the gospel. Emphasising that only δύναμις θεοῦ (“the strength that comes from God”) can make it possible for him to continue his work, the author

¹¹ Cf. N. Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe. 1 Timotheus. 2 Timotheus. Titus*, Regensburg 1989⁵, p. 230 (Regensburger Neues Testament).

indicates the continuity of God's presence in the work of salvation. In the same way as God undertook the work of creation and salvation of man, he supported the young bishop of Ephesus in his ministry of the gospel.

Verse 9a starts with the verb σώζω (“save,” “redeem,” “free”), which in 2 Tim initiates a number of references to the idea of “salvation” (cf. 2 Tim 1:10; 2:10; 3:15; 4:18). In *Corpus Paulinum*¹² it is connected with the redemption from sin and its consequences.¹³ The application of the object pronoun ἡμᾶς (“us”), stresses the universal character of the message in verses 9 and 10. The work of salvation, fulfilled in the past, has consequences not only for Paul and Timothy, but for all people.

There is an exegetical difficulty connected with the second part of verse 9a: καὶ καλέσαντος κλήσει ἅγια. The interpretation of the verb καλέω (“call,” “appoint,” “summon”) in the context of salvation makes it a *terminus technicus*. It describes the works of God, who, through the works of Jesus Christ, calls all men to holiness of life by graciously bestowing redemption from sin according to His eternal plan (cf. also Rom 8:28–30; 1 Tim 6:12).¹⁴ At the same time, this verb clearly exposes the initiative of God in the act of salvation. The cognate noun κλήσις (“calling”) used with the adjective ἅγιος (“holy”) raises some doubts as to the proper interpretation of the phrase. This expression, deriving from the Semitic thought patterns, due to the use of the adjective ἅγιος might generally point to the source of the calling – it is “holy” since it comes from God.¹⁵ However, the dative form suggests some means used by God in order to accomplish the salvation plan, and not the source of salvation itself. There

¹² In this paper the expression *Corpus Paulinum* is used with reference to all Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Epistles.

¹³ Cf. W. Foerster, σώζω, σωτηρία, [in:] *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, begründet von G. Kittel, in Verbindung mit zahlreichen Fachgenossen herausgegeben von G. Friedrich, Stuttgart 1966, vol. 7, p. 992–996.

¹⁴ Cf. W. D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Nashville 2000, p. 482 (Word Biblical Commentary, 46).

¹⁵ Cf. G. W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles. A commentary on the Greek Text*, Grand Rapids-Michigan 1999², p. 374 (The New International Greek Testament Commentary); G. D. Fee, *Comentario de las Epístolas a 1ª y 2ª de Timoteo y Tito*, op. cit., p. 267.

is no clear answer to this question. One of the ideas of interpretation is e.g. the proclamation of the Gospel as a way of accepting the calling of God and the commitment to follow Him (cf. 2 Thess 2:14)¹⁶ or baptism through which one opens to God's salutary will.¹⁷ The expression κλήσει ἁγία might refer to the aim of this calling "[God did not call us to impurity but] to holiness" (cf. 1 Thess 4:7) and "[called] to be holy" (cf. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2).¹⁸ The multitude of uses of both καλέω and κλήσις in the New Testament (cf. Rom 8:30; 1 Cor 1:9.26; 7:17.20; Gal 1:6; Phil 3:14; 1 Thess 4:7; 2 Thess 1:11) does not exclude either of these interpretations.

v. 9b

οὐ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ἡμῶν ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἰδίαν πρόθεσιν καὶ χάριν

not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace

This verse, similarly to Titus 3:5 and Eph 2:8–9, touches on the issue of God's free will and his initiative in the salvation of man. The thought is first presented from a negative point of view – man could not initiate his salvation through his own works. The preposition κατὰ, used with the accusative case, expresses the reason (cause) for something or the basis of a particular action.¹⁹ Its negative (οὐ) stresses the lack of any kind of possibility for man to initiate his own process of salvation in order to set himself free from evil. The fundament of the work of salvation were not any righteous deeds of men, but God's voluntary intervention in His mercy. The lexeme ἔργον, the semantics of which includes terms referring to taking action ("action," "deed," "work") may also contain a metaphorical aspect or indicate the moral value of a particular action.²⁰ In 2 Tim 1:9 it generally refers to human works, which could not influence God's

¹⁶ Cf. P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, op. cit., p. 468.

¹⁷ Cf. L. Oberlinner, *Zweiter Timotheusbrief*, op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁸ Cf. G. D. Fee, *Comentario de las Epístolas a 1ª y 2ª de Timoteo y Tito*, op. cit., p. 267.

¹⁹ Cf. κατὰ, [in:] R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 319.

²⁰ See: τὰ ἔργα πονηρά ("evil works") (Jn 3:19; 7:7; Col 1:21; 1 Jn 3:12); τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός ("works of darkness") (Rom 13:12; Eph 5:11); τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός ("the works

work of salvation. Recognising and obeying the Laws, even before they were codified, could not have any impact on God's will.²¹ The purpose of the expression οὐ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα is not the negation of the value of human deeds. The Holy Scripture stresses that faith is dead if it is not followed by righteous deeds (see: Jas 2:14–26; Mt 7:21; 2 Cor 11:9; Gal 6:10; Phil 4:10–19). That is why it cannot be separated from the necessity of doing the will of our Father in heaven, for which faith should be the constant motivating factor. However, the salvation of man was not the result of his righteous deeds, but of God's love and mercy for him (see Titus 3:3–7).²²

The fact that God cannot be persuaded to originate the work of salvation is emphasised in the second part of this verse, 9b: ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἰδίαν πρόθεσιν καὶ χάριτι. It was God himself who was the initiator and originator of salvation. Saint John Chrysostom indicated that clearly in his Homily on Second Timothy:²³ “no one compelling, no one counselling Him, but of His own purpose, from the impulse of His own goodness, He saved us.” The two parts of this verse, and at the same time their contrasting character, are shown by the particle ἀλλά (“but”). Together with the preposition κατὰ that it is followed by, it introduces the reader

of the flesh”) (Gal 5:19); τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου (“the works of the devil”) (1 Jn 3:8); ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων (“dead works”) (Heb 6:1; 9:14).

²¹ This kind of interpretation is based on the expression τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ ἐποιεῖτε (“you would be doing the works of Abraham”) (Jn 8:39), which suggests that Abraham was familiar with the Law, although it had not been written down yet. For the interpretation of ἔργον as “works resulting from the Law” – cf. H. L. Strack, P. Billerbeck, *Das Evangelium nach Marcus, Lukas und Johannes und Die Apostelgeschichte erläutert aus Talmud und Midrasch*, München 1924, vol. 2, p. 524 (Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, 2).

²² Titus 3:4: ὅτε δὲ ἡ χρηστότης καὶ ἡ φιλανθρωπία ἐπεφάνη τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ (“But when the kindness and generous love of God our saviour appeared”).

²³ John Chrysostom, *Homily II on Second Timothy*, [in:] idem, *Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2005 (A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 13).

to the fundamentals of salvation, which are πρόθεσις (“plan,” “decision”) and χάρις (“grace,” “favour,” “blessing”) of God.

In *Corpus Paulinum* there are numerous references to God’s πρόθεσις of salvation (see Rom 8:28; 9:11; Eph 1:11; 3:11). This decision is related to God’s ‘wish’ to become human again, created in the divine image (cf. Gen 1:26–27).²⁴ The initiative of returning to the original bond between God and man originated from God, what is clearly manifested by the use of the adjective ἴδιος (“[his] own”). God is completely independent in his decisions and the actions He takes. No human would be able to recreate this bond without the intervention of God. That is why having presented the source of the work of salvation (ιδίαν πρόθεσιν), the author immediately shows the attitude of God towards man, which is full of grace and favour. The term χάρις introduces the tactics of the process of salvation as well.

v. 9c

τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων
bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began

This phrase is the beginning of the second part of the couplet. Jesus Christ is placed in its central position. It is Him that made God’s grace available to humans. In this verse, as well as in both Epistles to Timothy (see 1 Tim 1:14; 3:13; 2 Tim 1:1. 9. 13; 2:1. 10; 3:12. 15), the formula ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ points to Christ as the way or medium of salvation and love, and not the mystical connection with Him.²⁵ He is the mediator between God and men and expresses God’s commitment to men (cf. 1 Tim 2:5).

The grace of salvation was given to man πρὸ χρόνων αἰωνίων. This particular expression appears in the same form in Titus 1:2, and trans-

²⁴ Cf. C. Marcheselli-Casale, *Le Lettere Pastorali. Le due lettere a Timoteo e la lettera a Tito. Introduzione, versione, commento*, Bologna 2008², p. 660 (Scritti delle origini cristiane, 15).

²⁵ Cf. J. A. Allan, *The ‘in Christ’ formula in the Pastoral Epistles*, “New Testament Studies” 10 (1963–1964), p. 116–117.

lated literally as “before eternity,” contains the idea of “beyond time.”²⁶ It shows that even before the creation of the world God had planned to bestow on man the fullness of eternal life. Apart from presenting the plan of salvation, the following verse emphasises the pre-existence of the Son of God.²⁷ Even before the incarnation and the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth, the person of the Son existed as the second person of the Holy Trinity. The Son of God is also the creator of the plan of salvation, and not its passive executor in the person of Jesus Christ. The self – revelation of the Son of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, His passion and resurrection were the accomplishment of what He had planned ‘before eternity’ as Triune God.

v. 10a

φανερωθεῖσαν δὲ νῦν διὰ τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ
but now made manifest through the appearance of our saviour Christ Jesus

The thought of the inspired author moves from “beyond time” to the earthly time (χρόνος), the time that can be measured and specified. The contrast between the times is emphasised by the expression δὲ νῦν (“whereas now”; “but now”). The fact that they contrast does not necessarily mean they are in opposition. The epiphany of the Son of God in time (cf. Gal 4:4) gave salutary meaning to historical time. It became the space in which the accomplishment of the eternal plan of salvation of man took place.

Verse 10a is syntactically connected with the term χάρις (v. 9b), what is especially stressed by the second pair of participles: δοθεῖσαν (“bestowed”) (v. 9c) – φανερωθεῖσαν (“made” [manifest through]) (v. 10a). The grace of salvation was bestowed on man even “before eternity,” and

²⁶ “Beyond time” – L. T. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland 2001, p. 348 (The Anchor Bible, 35A).

²⁷ Cf. J. Stepien, *Listy do Tesaloniczan i Pasterskie. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Poznań-Warszawa 1979, p. 412 (Pismo Święte Nowego Testamentu, 9); L. T. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, op. cit., p. 348–349.

now it was made visible, and therefore made concrete. The participles constitute the *continuum* of God's works, and the fact that they are used in their passive forms implies God's absolute initiative and execution. The verb φανερώ (‘‘make manifest through,’’ ‘‘reveal,’’ ‘‘show’’) analysed with reference to 1 Tim 3:16, shows the threefold salutary work of the Son of God: incarnation (ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί) (1 Tim 3:16a), resurrection (1 Tim 3:16a.b) and ascension (1 Tim 3:16c).²⁸ These three stages of the epiphany of the Son of God form the historical frame of time for the accomplishment of the grace bestowed (δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν) (v. 9c) on us.

The second part of verse 10a explains the way in which this grace became visible. It was made through the revelation of Jesus Christ on earth. The revelation (τῆς ἐπιφανείας) of the Saviour is stressed by the preposition διά, which is used in Greek literature in order to direct towards the acting or mediating factor.²⁹ In verse 10a the word ἐπιφανεῖα (‘‘appearance,’’ ‘‘manifestation’’) refers to the first appearance of the Son of God on earth – His incarnation and all His works till the day of His ascension. It is the only place in the New Testament in which lexeme ἐπιφανεῖα is used in this way, as in all five other cases (see 2 Thess 2:8; 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1.8; Titus 2:13) it always applies to the second coming of Jesus on the Final Day. The first epiphany, made by Jesus Christ in the present (νῦν) became the essence of the Gospel proclaimed in order to prepare humanity for the future encounter with the Lord.

The one who revealed Himself – Christ Jesus – received the title ὁ σωτήρ ἡμῶν (‘‘our Saviour’’). The word σωτήρ in extra-biblical literature was used to describe a rescuer who freed others from danger, or generally about someone, who offered a helping hand. The term could also refer to a doctor, who brought health to the sick. It expressed the mutual dependence of the saved one on the one who provided him with help. In the New Testament it was used solely with the meaning of ‘‘saviour,’’ ‘‘rescuer,’’ ‘‘liberator’’ and refers to God only (8 times to God generally and 16 times

²⁸ Cf. C. Marcheselli-Casale, *Le Lettere Pastorali*, op. cit., p. 661.

²⁹ Cf. R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 125.

to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Lord, the Son of God).³⁰ In verse 10a the title is used with reference to Christ, which results in a slow transition of the subject of the couplet – from God to Jesus Christ. The initiative of salvation originated in God the Saviour and is accomplished through Christ, who is a mediator between God and men (cf. 1 Tim 2:5). God remains invisible. In Christ – “our Saviour” – the grace and love of God for men³¹ is manifested (φανερωθεῖσαν). The epiphany (τῆς ἐπιφανείας) of Christ fulfils the work of salvation initiated even “before eternity.”

v. 10b

καταργήσαντος μὲν τὸν θάνατον φωτίσαντος δὲ ζῶην καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου

[Christ Jesus], who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel

The grace of God is not only visible but also effective³² in Jesus Christ. It has two opposite results, presented by the third pair of participles: a negative one – destruction (καταργήσαντος) [of death] and a positive one – bringing [life and immortality] to light (φωτίσαντος). The contrast was strengthened by the use of particles μὲν – δέ (“indeed” – “while”), which stressed the opposition or the separation of particular elements of the sentence³³ in Ancient Greek and in *koinē*.

The verb used in the first part of verse 10b – καταργέω – literally translated means “to act against something,” in order to nullify, weaken

³⁰ Cf. W. Foerster, σωτήρ, [in:] *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 7, op. cit., p. 1004–1024; σωτήρ, [in:] R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 591–592.

³¹ Cf. J. Gnilika, *Teologia Nowego Testamentu*, przekł. W. Szymona, Kraków 2002, p. 457.

³² Cf. J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles. I & II Timothy. Titus*, London 1978⁴, p. 163 (Black's New Testament Commentaries).

³³ See: F. Blass, A. Debrunner, F. Rehkopf, *Grammatica del greco del Nuovo Testamento*, ed. italiana a cura di G. Pisi, Brescia 1997², § 447, 2 (Introduzione allo studio della Bibbia. Supplementi, 2).

or even destroy it.³⁴ In the New Testament it is mostly used with eschatological issues, when it refers to the victory of Christ over death: ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ θάνατος (“the last enemy to be destroyed is death”) (1 Cor 15:26).³⁵ In 1 Cor death is still effective and mercilessly takes its toll. Its end was to come with eternity. For the addressees of 2 Tim and all its contemporary readers death was, and still is, the reminder that the time of full salvation is yet to come. However, the aorist of the participle καταργήσαντος in 2 Tim 2:10b indicates that Christ’s victory over death was already accomplished in the past through his resurrection, which proved death to be unavailing and its efforts futile. This event was also the announcement of the reality that was to come through the Parousia of the Son of God. However, all Christians may live the life with Christ, which will lead them to freedom and eternity (see Rom 6:6–7; 14:8–9; 2 Cor 4:9; 1 Thess 5:10).

The use of the article ὁ before θάνατος (2 Tim 2:10b; 1 Cor 15:26) allows for a personal interpretation of death as a real enemy of Christ. This kind of explanation leads to satan as the one who had the power of death (cf. Heb 2:14; Jn 8:44).³⁶ The fact that death was deprived of any kind of power over Christ, deprived the devil himself of the power over life, as he was defeated by the Paschal work of Christ. When united with Jesus Christ, man is also a victor over death, which is realised by the sacramental life of the Church.³⁷

In the second part of verse 10b the author uses the verb φωτίζω, which is translated as “bring to light,” “light,” “fill with light.”³⁸ In *Corpus*

³⁴ Cf. L. T. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, op. cit., p. 349.

³⁵ Cf. 1 Cor 13:8, 10; 2 Thess 2:8; Heb 2:14. The verb καταργέω is used 27 times in the New Testament. For the analysis of its multidimensional use see: G. Delling, καταργέω, [in:] *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, p. 453–455.

³⁶ Cf. C. Spicq, *Saint Paul. Les Épîtres Pastorales*, Paris 1969⁴, vol. 2, p. 716 (Études Bibliques).

³⁷ Cf. P. Iovino, *Lettere a Timoteo. Lettera a Tito. Nuova versione, introduzione e commento*, Milano 2005, p. 187 (I Libri Biblici. Nuovo Testamento, 15).

³⁸ Cf. φωτίζω, [in:] R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu*, op. cit., p. 648.

Paulinum the meaning of this verb closest to 2 Tim 10b can be found in Cor 4:5 and Eph 3:9. In each of these texts it refers to the contrast between light and darkness, the aim of which is presenting sin as darkness and God as light. The participle φωτίσαντος points to the source of light, which is Jesus Christ (v. 10a) – “the light of the world” (Jn 8:12). The inspired author mentions two areas lit by Christ: ζωή (“life”) and ἀφθαρσία (“immortality”). Put together they become attributes of God, characterising His immortality and at the same time referring to eternal life of the saved.³⁹ The Son of God, by becoming human, accepting the suffering and death and later defeating death, brings light to human life, which allows man to gain eternal life with God. However, God lets man decide whether he wants to use the Gift of Light or stay in the darkness of the sin (cf. Rom 2:5–8; 2 Cor 4:3–4).

The last words of the couplet – διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (“through the gospel”) – can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, εὐαγγέλιον means the good news of the salvation of man, on the other – “the power of God” that makes the salvation possible (see Rom 1:16). The term combines the theoretical aspect (understanding what life and immortality are) as well as the practical one (the possibility of participating in eternal life).⁴⁰ Through the gospel one can understand life once again and fully participate in it.

The words finishing verse 10 (διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου) can also refer to verse 8, in which Timothy is encouraged to accept (bear) the hardship for the sake of the gospel: συγκακοπάθησον τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. It is not the encouragement to suffer for the sake of the suffering itself. The expression “bear the hardship for the gospel” indicates suffering for the cause, which in 2 Tim 1:8 is the proclamation of the gospel. Being a prisoner for God’s sake, Paul accepted his hardship for the cause and he tried to persuade Timothy to adopt a similar attitude. As it has been mentioned, the hardship for the gospel can refer to martyrdom, or, what seems to be more likely, the difficulties connected with the proclamation of the gospel. The end of verse 10 would serve as a reference to the earlier encourage-

³⁹ Cf. P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, op. cit., p. 472.

⁴⁰ Cf. J. Stępień, *Listy do Tesaloniczan i Pasterskie*, op. cit., p. 413.

ment to perseverance in bearing hardship for the gospel and verse 9 and 10 would present arguments why accepting the hardship was worth the effort – it brought the understanding of the fact that proclaiming the truths of the gospel is a means of salvation for men.⁴¹

4. Conclusion

The analysis of 2 Tim 1:9–10 allows us to see the salvation of man as a process initiated beyond time and realised in time. Its originator and initiator is God. Man could not influence the initiation or the course of the process, he could, however, and still can, accept or reject its results.

The economy of salvation according to 2 Tim 1:9–10 indicates the importance and dignity of man for whom, even before he was created, God had planned the grace of mutual and eternal co-existence. Revealing the grace through the life and works of Jesus Christ set man free from the consequences of his own sin, so that he could enjoy his closeness to God, which will be fully accomplished in the eternity of man with God. The proclamation of the gospel is the way of achieving this goal.

The message in 2 Tim 1:9–10 was supposed to strengthen young Timothy in his concern and care for the Christian community in Ephesus and encourage him to perseverance in the hardship of proclaiming the gospel, even if dying as a martyr was the consequence. The message of 2 Tim 1:6–2:13, with the special meaning of verse 9 and 10, was clear for Timothy – stay adamant, stir your gift into flame, participate in the hardship in order to become one of those who defeated death through Christ.⁴² The economy of salvation, although it is entirely a work of God, needs man in order to serve its purpose.

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⁴¹ Cf. P. H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, op. cit., p. 473.

⁴² Cf. G. D. Fee, *Comentario de las Epístolas a 1ª y 2ª de Timoteo y Tito*, op. cit., p. 268.

Summary

The Economy of Salvation According to 2 Tm 1:9–10

The article on *The Economy of Salvation According to 2 Tm 1, 9–10* is the analysis of the hymnic – liturgical couplet that touches on three thematic aspects concerning salvation: the redemption of man made by God (v. 9a); perennial decision of Jesus Christ to redeem man (v. 9b) and the consequences of redemption – new, lasting life (v. 10). 2 Tm 1:9–10 describes salvation as God's grace for man, who would not have been able to initiate or fulfil this act in any other way. However, man had and still has the opportunity to decide whether he wants to accept or reject its consequences. The study of 2 Tm 1:9–10 also points out the semantic and thematic integrity of this couplet with the whole pericope of 2 Tm 1:6–14. It does not disturb the main thought of the pericope (faithfulness and perseverance in the ministry of the gospel) and serves as its full explanation, showing the Gospel for which it is worth to accept suffering, martyrdom or the daily, systematic and hard work connected with proclaiming the Good News of salvation of man made by Jesus Christ.

Keywords

Jesus Christ, Timothy, salvation, grace

Streszczenie

Ekonomia zbawienia według 2 Tm 1, 9–10

Artykuł podejmuje analizę hymniczno-liturgicznego dwuwiersza, który porusza trzy aspekty tematyczne: odkupienie człowieka przez Boga (w. 9a); odwieczne postanowienie zbawienia człowieka przez Jezusa Chrystusa (w. 9b) oraz skutki odkupienia – nowe, nieprzemijające życie (w. 10). 2 Tm 1, 9–10 eksponuje zbawienie jako łaskę Boga wobec człowieka, który w żaden sposób nie mógł sam zainicjować lub zrealizować tego dzieła. Człowiek jednakże mógł i wciąż może przyjąć lub odrzucić jego skutki. Studium 2 Tm 1, 9–10 wskazuje również na semantyczną i tematyczną integralność tego dwuwiersza z całą perykopą 2 Tm 1, 6–14. Nie tylko nie przerywa on głównej myśli całej wypowiedzi (wierność i wytrwałość w służbie Ewangelii), ale stanowi jej szczegółowe wyjaśnienie, wskazując, czym jest Ewangelia, dla której warto przyjąć cierpienie wiążące się z nie-

dalekim męczeństwem lub też z codzienną, systematyczną i uciążliwą pracą związaną z przepowiadaniem Dobrej Nowiny o zbawieniu człowieka dokonany przez Boga w osobie Jezusa Chrystusa.

Słowa kluczowe

Jezus Chrystus, Tymoteusz, zbawienie, łaska

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The Dynamism of the Sacraments of Healing in the Service of Church Community Building

In his apostolic letter *Novo millennio ineunte* Pope John Paul II said: “To make the Church *the home and the school of communion*: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God’s plan and respond to the world’s deepest yearnings.”¹ The issue of commitment and planning on the part of the Church of the domain of communion was pointed out as an important aspect, since it “embodies and reveals the very essence of the mystery of the Church.”² Inspired by the prophetic vision of Blessed John Paul, the pastors of the Church in Poland took up works to make the Church a real home for her children. The statement became the keynote of the Polish Pastoral Program at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century.

Building the church community is of key importance for creating a common sense of fraternity, unity and peace in the world. John Paul’s successor, Benedict XVI, made a clear statement concerning this issue: “In a multiethnic society that is experiencing increasingly disturbing forms of loneliness and indifference, Christians must learn to offer signs of hope and to become universal brethren, cultivating the great ideals that transform history and, without false illusions or useless fears, must strive to make the planet a home for all peoples.”³

¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43.

² *Ibidem*, 42.

³ Benedict XVI, Message for the World Mission Sunday 2010.

In the life and mission of the contemporary Church the sacrament of penance and reconciliation as well as the sacrament of anointing of the sick play an important role. The two sacraments are referred to as the Sacraments of Healing⁴ – and, as the arguments presented in this paper show, bringing the immense grace of the Lord, partake in the process of building the unity of the Church. Fulfilling all moral obligations in the Church community deriving from the sacraments of penance and anointing, Christians may become symbols of “a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.”⁵ That is why the sacraments of penance and anointing should be perceived as a huge gift of Christ for the sake of the whole Church. Many issues presented in this paper aim at reviving the charisms received in the sacraments of penance and anointing.

1. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in the Service of Church Community Building

Pope Benedict XVI in his post – synodal exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* reminds that an important pastoral duty nowadays is “promoting [...] a reinvigorated catechesis on the conversion born of the Eucharist, and [...] encouraging frequent confession among the faithful.”⁶ Worthy and frequent confessions have an important role in shaping Christian life and building the Church community. It is therefore important to try to achieve greater understanding of the healing power of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation among the members of the Church community, and, in the celebration of this sacrament, greater maturity among Christians. This would help to draw the faithful “into

⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 61.

⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

⁶ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, 21.

ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all.”⁷

The sacrament of penance is the sacrament of double reconciliation: through absolution man is reunited with God whom he had insulted, and with the Church that had been wounded by his sin.

If the celebration of the sacrament of penance is not to become some fashionable psychological or psychotherapeutic act in which the disposition of the penitent becomes the most important aspect, it is necessary to present it as a salutary act in which God, the Merciful Father, makes it possible for man to reconcile with Him through Christ and in the Holy Spirit. God confirms His love to man constantly looking for man, lost due to his sins. The salvific will of loving and merciful God is made visible in the sacrament of reconciliation. The centre of the reconciliation work is Jesus Christ, who embraces man with His salvific love embodied in His Passion, Death and Resurrection.⁸

Showing the sacrament of penance as a salutary act indicates a close relation of the sacrament to the truth of divine mercy. A Christian called for the recognition and confession of his sins is at the same time introduced to the world of divine mercy.⁹ It was in God’s mercy that the greatest truth of love was revealed, and the symbol of this merciful love is Christ, who gave his life on the cross to make atonement for sin.¹⁰ In the same manner that God manifests his mercy towards man, man is obliged to manifest mercy towards others. It is the only way to raise to full and constant imitation of Christ.

A Christian becomes a true man of God when he celebrates the sacrament of penance and reconciliation with faith, hope and love. Thanks to

⁷ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 48.

⁸ Cf. P. Góralczyk, *Wyzwolenie człowieka z grzechu*, „Communio” 10 (1990) no. 1, p. 15.

⁹ Cf. A. Drożdż, *Kompetencja teologiczna w sakramencie pokuty*, [in:] *Sztuka spowiednia. Poradnik dla księży*, red. J. Augustyn, S. Cyran, Kraków 2005, p. 103–105; J. Nagórny, *Sakrament pokuty w kontekście miłosierdzia*, [in:] *Wierzę w Boga Ojca. Program duszpasterski na rok 1998/99*, Katowice 1998, p. 210–244.

¹⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in misericordia*, 12.

the gift of faith bestowed upon man through baptism, he can celebrate the sacrament of penance as if he was standing under the cross, in order to prepare himself for the gift of atonement, washing in the blood of Christ and answering with love to the gift of love itself. The fruits one receives during the confession: the experience of divine mercy, inner peace and multiplication of graces, have a direct influence on shaping the virtue of hope, which expects the fulfilment of God's promises of eternal life. In the sacrament of penance man answers to God's mercy with faith, hope and love.¹¹

The Good News of salvation leads us to another conclusion: not only is a sin the offence committed against God, but it also wounds the Church.¹² "Sin," says Benedict XVI in the aforementioned exhortation "is never a purely individual affair; it always damages the ecclesial communion that we have entered through Baptism."¹³ As we can see, sin is not only a form of rejecting the love of God, it is also the rejection of the Church being the manifest of reconciliation and mercy. Consequently, the act of reconciliation can only take place in the Church and by means of her ministry.¹⁴ The Church is the sacramental symbol of atonement and reconciliation. There is no atonement without the Church. It is worth mentioning that in order to form a reconciling community, the Church needs to be reconciled and set an example of reconciliation. One of the ways to achieve this goal is a true participation of the members of the Church in the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, which is synonymous with subjecting oneself to the unifying works of Christ and the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

The celebration of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation in the ecclesial dimension seems to be an especially contemporary challenge

¹¹ Cf. J. Nagórny, *Sakrament pokuty drogą do wewnętrznej harmonii*, „Pastores” 4 (1999), p. 145.

¹² Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 11.

¹³ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, 20.

¹⁴ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliation and penance*, 10–11.

¹⁵ Cf. G. Ciccola, F. Targoński, *Poradnik spowiednika*, tłum. B. A. Gancarz, M. Wszolek, Kraków 1999, p. 21–24.

for the Church in Poland, since there is considerable evidence of its desacralisation. The faithful who often confess run the risk of getting into a routine and moralism in the process. Many of them do not fully understand the core of this sacrament, that is why celebrating it has a merely formal character. This kind of approach neither brings spiritual growth, nor leads to conversion. Others, in an attempt to find some motivation for practising the sacrament of penance, want to make it a kind of meeting or a psychological consult, forgetting about its religious character or even rejecting the perspective of the encounter with the merciful God. Among many other indications of the process of desacralisation of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, there are some pastoral practices, which obscure the ecclesial importance of penance and reconciliation as well as the personal dimension of good and evil, putting this sacrament at risk of becoming merely a common ritual.¹⁶

It seems that the desacralisation of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation is caused by the fundamental phenomenon of the loss of the sense of sin. If one does not recognise sin, and cannot admit to having committed it, and every presentation of the sense of sin is treated by him as a false and excessive sense of guilt, he will not perceive penance as the road to atonement of sin, but rather as a means of freeing himself from the sense of guilt and responsibility for his actions.¹⁷ The loss of the sense of sin is strongly connected with an obscured sense of God, which proves the presence of the aforementioned secular tendencies. It also reflects the loss of the moral conscience and the search for truth.¹⁸

The main way of overcoming these desacralising tendencies in the approach to the sacrament of penance is making constant efforts to improve the understanding of what the sacraments are, especially the one leading to the reconciliation with God and the Church. The times of popular missions and spiritual retreats are perfect occasions for that, so it is really important to organise penitential celebrations at those times.

¹⁶ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliation and penance*, 18.

¹⁷ Cf. J. Orzeszyna, *Wezwanie do pojednania*, [in:] *Wyzwania moralne przełomu tysięcy*, red. J. Nagórny, A. Derdziuk, Lublin 1999, p. 44–51.

¹⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliation and penance*, 18.

Pope Benedict XVI emphasises such a need in the exhortation *Verbum Domini*: “When possible, it would be good that at particular times of the year, or whenever the opportunity presents itself, individual confession by a number of penitents should take place within penitential celebrations as provided for by the ritual.”¹⁹ It is true that the faithful usually respond well to penitential celebrations. If the examination of conscience is conducted in a proper way, considering the characteristics of the group it concerns (children, adolescents, adults) the range of issues that need to be reflected upon before the individual confession can be broadened. Confessors can easily notice the difference between the confession of a penitent who was prepared through the penitential celebration and the one who was not.

Penitential celebrations help understand the communal dimension of the sin and the necessity of communal satisfaction as the final act which crowns the sacrament. They build the sense of perception of the Church as a community, and not as a formalised institution. The sacrament of penance is not some reality taking place in a shamefully hidden confessional, but it becomes a common and public event. The sin committed by man is not a problem between him and God, but an issue truly concerning the Church the holiness of which is lessened by the sin committed, the Church that man is a part of. Before man asks God for the forgiveness of the sin, he asks the community first, apologising for the lack of love and responsibility.²⁰ It is also advisable to invite the faithful to participate in the appropriate common catechesis, so that the involvement in the mutual forgiveness and reconciliation could grow. Common celebrations make the ecclesial aspect of reconciliation more real.²¹

Deepened celebration of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation in the Church community is the answer to the appeal of John Paul II for the renewal of consciences. The Pope, following the teaching of Saint Paul, said that “conscience in a certain sense confronts man with the law, and thus becomes a ‘witness’ for man: a witness of his own faithfulness or unfaith-

¹⁹ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 61.

²⁰ Cf. W. Słomka, *Pokuta jako kontestacja w życiu chrześcijańskim*, [in:] *Miłość większa niż grzech*, red. A. J. Nowak, W. Słomka, Lublin 1996, p. 79–84 (Homo Meditans, 13)

²¹ Cf. C. Squarise, *Istota spowiedzi*, tłum. T. Homa, [in:] *Sztuka spowiadania. Poradnik dla księży*, red. J. Augustyn, S. Cyran, Kraków 2005, p. 80–81.

fulness with regard to the law, of his essential moral rectitude or iniquity. Conscience is the *only* witness, since what takes place in the heart of the person is hidden from the eyes of everyone outside. Conscience makes its witness known only to the person himself. And, in turn, only the person himself knows what his own response is to the voice of conscience.”²²

John Paul II emphasises that since “conscience is like God’s herald and messenger; it does not command things on its own authority, but commands them as coming from God’s authority, like a herald when he proclaims the edict of the king. [...] conscience has binding force,”²³ which is why it is crucial to follow one’s conscience and listen to its voice, by multiplying the good and rejecting the evil, following Saint Paul’s advice: “Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good” (Rom 12:21). Being the teacher of the nation, the Church is faced with an enormous effort of shaping the human heart, which is harder and harder to reach and address effectively. The sacrament of penance and reconciliation celebrated in the right way may become an opportunity for the Church. It is undoubtedly true that people in Poland confess regularly. It is a great wealth that cannot be wasted. Popular missions and spiritual retreats are supposed to facilitate the process of discovering the importance of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. Their internal dynamism aims at the conversion of the participants, both the priests and the listeners present. This conversion is initiated by the sacrament of penance.

The group of the faithful who regularly go to confession, e.g. every first Friday of the month, constitute the perfect ground for the work to enhance the participation in the sacrament of penance and make it more fruitful. In their case, we must not make do with the level of freedom from grave sins that they have already reached, as what they need is true spiritual guidance. It is in spiritual guidance that the process of conversion can find the space and the means necessary to shape men and heal the ‘wounds’ in the life of Church community.

Whilst considering the ecclesial dimension of moral obligations deriving from the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, we must remember

²² John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor* 57.

²³ *Ibidem*, 58.

not to narrow the notion of forgiveness down to the sacramental absolution only. The notion needs to be broadened to other practices, especially the ones concerning the forms of social life, in the light of which the sacramental absolution can gain deeper meaning. One of the means of forgiveness in the Church is faithful and loving openness to the Word of God. The word of God, which has a significant position in penitential celebrations, aims at proclaiming God who loves and forgives, who appeals for conversion when He exposes sin. Benedict XVI emphasises the importance of the word of God as a means of reconciliation in the exhortation *Verbum Domini*: “We ought never to forget that ‘the word of God is a word of reconciliation, for in it God has reconciled all things to himself (cf. 2 Cor 5 : 18–20; Eph 1 : 10). The loving forgiveness of God, made flesh in Jesus, raises up the sinner’. ‘Through the word of God the Christian receives light to recognize his sins and is called to conversion and to confidence in God’s mercy’. To have a deeper experience of the reconciling power of God’s word, the individual penitent should be encouraged to prepare for confession by meditating on a suitable text of sacred Scripture and to begin confession by reading or listening to a biblical exhortation such as those provided in the rite. When expressing contrition it would be good if the penitent were to use ‘a prayer based on the words of Scripture’, such as those indicated in the rite.”²⁴ Therefore, we can state that the word of God prepares for the conversion, points to the ways of achieving it, makes one more sensitive and helps to shape the conscience.

Another way of reconciliation in the Church is compensation. It does not necessarily need to follow the sacramental absolution, it can precede it, being a proof of contrition and an honest willingness to convert. Active love of your neighbour, the ability to face marriage, family or professional challenges, or the ones connected with any kind of specific calling that one might have, are accepted and appreciated forms of reconciliation in the Church. Any form of participation in the cross of Christ is the participation in the act of reconciliation, manifested by God through the cross.²⁵

²⁴ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 61.

²⁵ Cf. J. Orzeszyna, *Wezwanie do pojednania...*, op. cit., p. 46–50.

In this context we can talk about the sacramental reconciliation through the Eucharist, as well as the connection between confession and the Eucharist.²⁶ And it is not only the question of confessing before approaching communion. The Eucharist itself has the power of freeing from venial sins, so it can be perceived as the source of absolution of sins. The penitential attitude of a Christian is also expressed through the Eucharist. In this light we must see the fact that daily conversion and penance find their source in the Eucharist, and are therefore connected with the sacramental act of confession.²⁷

We can conclude that every baptised man who wants to participate in the process of building the Church community fully needs to celebrate the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. The sacramental dimension of penance and reconciliation needs to be seen in the context of the truth about human sinfulness. In the same way as the theology of sin emphasises the communal aspect of sin, which has its reference to the Church community, the communal and, most importantly, ecclesial aspect of the sacrament of penance must be stressed. The communal and ecclesial character of the sacrament of penance reveals itself through the truth that it is a means of reconciliation not only with God, but also with people, especially within the Church community. The communal character of the sacrament of penance brings the fruits of unity among people, especially in the Church community.

2. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in the Service of Church Community Building

According to Church teaching, which emphasised the connection of the two, the sacrament of penance and reconciliation has a lot in com-

²⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, 20.

²⁷ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1436.

mon with the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.²⁸ The anointing of the sick, similarly to the sacrament of penance, has a salutary value, both for an individual and the Church community. It is the source of Christ's grace for the suffering man and for the Church.

Pope Benedict XVI in the exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* teaches that "Jesus did not only send his disciples forth to heal the sick (cf. Mt 10:8; Lk 9:2, 10:9); he also instituted a specific sacrament for them: the Anointing of the Sick. The *Letter of James* attests to the presence of this sacramental sign in the early Christian community (cf. 5:14–16)."²⁹ Talking about the anointing of the sick, Saint James gives specific indications to the suffering, in whom the sense of salvation is revealed, both for them and the whole Church community.

Most importantly, it needs to be pointed out that the sacrament of the anointing of the sick is, as any other sacrament, a personal meeting with Christ, who heals man from different ailments and gives the strength to live a holy life.³⁰ Receiving it is synonymous with the unification with Christ carrying the cross, but at the same time with Christ who was adored and victorious. In this sacrament Christ helps to give in to God's will and accept the physical and spiritual suffering. In their suffering the sick become like Christ, and the suffering they have to endure gains salutary value, therefore, through gaining deeper sense, it becomes easier to bear. The anointing of the sick is also a source of strength helping to endure in faith and love while experiencing hardship in sickness, as well as the source of hope for the future glory of salvation with Christ.³¹

In the sacrament of the anointing, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, God provides help for the sick man by absolving him of sin, comforting,

²⁸ Cf. W. Kasper, *Kościół jako miejsce przebaczenia grzechów*, tłum. L. Balter, „Communio” 10 (1990) no. 1, p. 50.

²⁹ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 22.

³⁰ Cf. B. Glinkowski, *Sakrament namaszczenia lekarstwem dla chorych chrześcijan*, „Studia Koszalińsko-Kołobrzeszkie” 8 (2003), p. 255–272.

³¹ Cf. J. Decyk, *Chrześcijański wymiar choroby i cierpienia*, „Homo Dei” 62 (1993) no. 3, p. 75; S. Rosik, *Tajemnica ludzkiego cierpienia, a moc Chrystusowego krzyża*, [in:] *Cierpienie i śmierć*, op. cit., p. 77–82.

and, God willing, bringing back to health.³² The man struggling with sickness is visited by Christ himself, who comes to ease his suffering, absolve him and give him strength. The sacrament of the anointing can therefore be seen as a kind of medicine for the sick. It helps to discover the sense of the suffering, as well as notice the sense of existence while struggling with the illness, since finding answers in the pursuit of the sense and value of life³³ is one of the deepest aspirations of man.

Christ called for accepting and enduring the suffering on numerous occasions. He stated clearly that anyone who wishes to follow him, must take up his cross daily (cf. Lk 9:23). For Christ the suffering is the test of one's adherence to Christ. Therefore, a condition of becoming His disciple is denying oneself. If a man takes up his cross, spiritually unifying with Christ, the suffering he endures becomes comprehensible. One can find his inner peace, and, at times, even the joy that results from it. The sick person becomes spiritually more mature, is enriched with goodness, patience and love. From this perspective it is easier to understand the words of Pope Benedict XVI from the encyclical letter *Spe salvi*, that "It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather by our capacity for accepting it, maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love."³⁴ "Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful."³⁵ Christ is the origin of all the light that shines upon human suffering and gives it the meaning it has. John Paul II in the Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris* encourages us to 'use' the suffering for the sake of salvation. He calls it the deepest need of the heart and the imperative of faith.³⁶ Suffering must not be made a primary goal, but needs to be interpreted properly.

³² Cf. *Wprowadzenie teologiczne i pastoralne*, [in:] *Sakramenty chorych. Obrzędy i duszpasterstwo*, Poznań 2010, no. 6.

³³ More on the subject of understanding the sense of human suffering in: J. Wróbel, *Człowiek i medycyna. Teologicznomoralne podstawy ingerencji medycznych*, Kraków 1999, p. 137–194.

³⁴ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi*, 37.

³⁵ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

³⁶ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 4.

The sacrament of the anointing unites the sick with Christ, giving them the grace of enduring the suffering and directing it at Christ.³⁷

For Christ suffering is also the test of adherence to the Church, which is His Mystical Body. It needs to be remembered that the sick constitute 'the Church of Suffering'. They are not useless or redundant in the Church and the community. They have their unique place and their indispensable role in the Church.³⁸ They also have their own sacrament, the aim of which is to work for the common good of the Church community as well as the good of the suffering man. Pope John Paul II perceived suffering as God's grace bestowed on man. Recalling the tragic events on 13 May 1981 (an attempt at his life) he pointed out that the suffering he experienced and the danger he was exposed to helped him realise that God's grace for him as a man, as well as the whole Church community, was revealed through this ordeal. He stressed that in his suffering, John Paul could bear witness to the love and truth of the Lord.³⁹ Pope's words clearly indicate that when the suffering is connected with the cross of Christ, its salvific sense, not only for himself but for the whole Church, is revealed. That is why the sick man, according to Saint Paul, rejoices in his sufferings for his own sake and for the sake of others, in his flesh filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the Church (cf. Col 1 : 24).⁴⁰

At the same time John Paul II emphasises that the Church sees the ones receiving the sacrament of the anointing of the sick as the Christ Himself, being the source of the miraculous strength: "Faith in sharing in the suffering of Christ brings with it the interior certainty that the suffering person [...] in the spiritual dimension of the work of Redemption [...] is *servimg*, like Christ, *the salvation of his brothers and sisters*."⁴¹

³⁷ Cf. M. Pyc, *Znaki Trynitarnej Bliskości. Teologicalny wymiar sakramentów świętych*, Poznań 2007, p. 171.

³⁸ *Wprowadzenie teologiczne i pastoralne*, op. cit., no. 3.

³⁹ Cf. John Paul II, General Audience of 14 October 1981.

⁴⁰ Cf. B. Testa, *Sakramenty Kościoła. Podręcznik teologii katolickiej*, vol. 9, Poznań 1999, p. 277.

⁴¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 27.

Christ summons the sick to work with Him towards the salvation of the world, which Pope Benedict XVI points out in *Sacramentum caritatis*: “the Anointing of the Sick, for its part, unites the sick with Christ’s self-offering for the salvation of all, so that they too, within the mystery of the communion of saints, can participate in the redemption of the world.”⁴² A sick man anointed with oil in the name of the Lord (cf. Jas 5: 14) is not only encouraged to incorporate his own pain in the Passion of Christ, he is also expected to share with others the strength of renewal and joy of the Risen Christ.⁴³ Through receiving the sacramental grace, the sick person partakes in the consecration of the whole Church community. Due to the faith one has receiving the sacrament, the suffering person acts for the benefit of the whole Church community, so the anointing of the sick has formative character: it helps to build both the sick man and the Church community.

The anointing of the sick, similarly to other sacraments, indicates the need of solidarity in suffering. On the one hand, the whole Church’s intercession in favour of the sick, as well as all kinds of help are expected from the community; on the other hand, the suffering of the sick is incorporated in the service of universal salvation due to the sacrament received. In this way, the sacrament of the anointing becomes an opportunity to discover the communal sense of suffering, as it is not only Christ that comes to man in his suffering, it is his Church as well. This Church, which is called to the ‘Good Samaritan’ work, at the same time suffers with one of its members in a mysterious way.

Looking at the contemporary reality, it seems obvious that with all our means we must try to renew the pastoral care for the sick and the suffering, which was also one of the stipulations made by John Paul II in his exhortation *Christifideles laici*: “It is necessary that this most precious heritage, which the Church has received from Jesus Christ, ‘Physician of the body and the spirit’, must never diminish but always must come to be more valued and enriched through renewal and decisive initiatives

⁴² Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, 22.

⁴³ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 53.

of *pastoral activity for and with the sick and suffering*.”⁴⁴ The Pope added in the encyclical letter *Redemptor hominis* that every man is “the way for the Church,”⁴⁵ and emphasised in *Salvifici doloris* that: “[...] man in a special fashion becomes the way for the Church when suffering enters his life.”⁴⁶ In order to keep her identity, the Church is obliged to serve the sick. It is a crucial aspect of the pastoral care.

The ecclesial character of the suffering is revealed in the way of experiencing it, which often brings the sense of communion with others who are suffering: “The world of suffering possesses as it were its *own solidarity*. People who suffer become similar to one another through the analogy of their situation, the trial of their destiny, or through their need for understanding and care, and perhaps above all through the persistent question of the meaning of suffering. Thus, although the world of suffering exists ‘in dispersion,’ at the same time it contains within itself a singular challenge to *communion and solidarity*.”⁴⁷

However, the aforementioned sense of solidarity is not limited to the community of the suffering. It encompasses the universal solidarity of all Church members, which means a special appeal to the healthy to open up to the sick.⁴⁸ It is expressed by the ‘Good Samaritan’ attitude, the key aspect of which is compassion (meaning co – suffering), as it is not always possible to physically ease the suffering: “The name ‘Good Samaritan’ fits *every individual who is sensitive to the sufferings of others*, who ‘is moved’ by the misfortune of another. [...] Therefore one must cultivate this sensitivity of heart, which bears witness to *compassion* towards a suffering person. Sometimes this compassion remains the only or principal expression of our love for and solidarity with the sufferer.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ibidem, 54.

⁴⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*, 14.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 3.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, 8.

⁴⁸ Cf. D. Człapiński, *Współczesny świat wobec spotkania Chrystusa i człowieka w sakramencie namaszczenia chorych*, „Studia Włocławskie” 4 (2001), p. 86–94.

⁴⁹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris*, 28.

John Paul II points out that the most important aspect of the ‘Good Samaritan’ approach is personal involvement in the help for the neighbour who is suffering. It is a crucial point to be made nowadays, when so many people want to burden charitable organisations with this obligation: “The eloquence of the parable of the Good Samaritan, and of the whole Gospel, is especially this: every individual must feel as if *called personally* to bear witness to love in suffering. The institutions are very important and indispensable; nevertheless, no institution can by itself replace the human heart, human compassion, human love or human initiative, when it is a question of dealing with the sufferings of another. This refers to physical sufferings, but it is even more true when it is a question of the many kinds of moral suffering, and when it is primarily the soul that is suffering.”⁵⁰

The communal sense of suffering is most fully revealed when perceived as the revelation of love and the call to love. With his pain, the suffering man can bear witness of his love to his neighbours and God, and at the same time his suffering is the call for the people around him to open up to him with love. Pope Benedict XVI shows this point of view in the encyclical letter *Spe salvi*: “The true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and to the sufferer. This holds true both for the individual and for society.”⁵¹ And later he adds: “To suffer with the other and for others [...], to suffer out of love and in order to become a person who truly loves – these are fundamental elements of humanity, and to abandon them would destroy man himself.”⁵²

The mystery of suffering is expressed in sickness and physical pain, but is not exhausted by them. That is why it remains a mystery. Can the suffering one must endure be interpreted as a gift of love, like we interpret life itself? Although it seems extremely difficult, impossible for some, with the power of faith in Christ, one may recognise a special gift of love in his suffering. Love, which is always a selfless gift, in the suffering is recognised as sacrifice. Love with no sacrifice is one of the greatest illusions of men of all times, but sacrifice without love seems to be almost

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 29.

⁵¹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe salvi*, 38.

⁵² *Ibidem*, 39.

absurd. If suffering is the gift one must accept, it is because there is no other way, no other means to give the proof of love. That is why “Love is also the richest source of the meaning of suffering, which always remains a mystery: we are conscious of the insufficiency and inadequacy of our explanations [...]. In order to discover the profound meaning of suffering, following the revealed word of God, we must open ourselves wide to the human subject in his manifold potentiality.”⁵³

John Paul II strongly emphasises this ecclesial character of suffering as being a call to love. In this way the salvific sense of suffering is revealed: “In the messianic programme of Christ, which is at the same time the programme of *the Kingdom of God*, suffering is present in the world in order to release love, in order to give birth to works of love towards neighbour, in order to transform the whole of human civilization into a ‘civilization of love’. In this love the salvific meaning of suffering is completely accomplished and reaches its definitive dimension.”⁵⁴ He also points out that: “Following the parable of the Gospel, we could say that suffering, which is present under so many different forms in our human world, is also present in order to *unleash love in the human person*, that unselfish gift of one’s ‘I’ on behalf of other people, especially those who suffer.”⁵⁵

There is no doubt that nowadays there are many opportunities for the communal celebration of this sacrament. Especially in hospital environments and during parish services for the sick (e.g. to celebrate the World Day of the Sick). It is a good opportunity to show that the sacrament itself is not directly connected with immediate death, and, most importantly, a chance to show the communal sense of suffering and sickness. The World Day of the Sick connected with the sacrament of the anointing gives an opportunity to sensitize the healthy to the Samaritan service they owe to the sick. At the same time the Church can offer the sick the gift of the Eucharist, which is the source of human solidarity and the centre of the moral life of Christians, which is clearly shown in *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “Like all the sacraments the Anointing of the Sick is a li-

⁵³ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, 13.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 30.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 29.

turgical and communal celebration, whether it takes place in the family home, a hospital or church, for a single sick person or a whole group of sick persons. It is very fitting to celebrate it within the Eucharist, the memorial of the Lord's Passover. If circumstances suggest it, the celebration of the sacrament can be preceded by the sacrament of Penance and followed by the sacrament of the Eucharist. As the sacrament of Christ's Passover the Eucharist should always be the last sacrament of the earthly journey, the 'viaticum' for 'passing over' to eternal life."⁵⁶ The participation of the sick in the Eucharist deepens their relationship with Christ and Church, tightens the covenant with God and reminds about the obligations that result from other sacraments. Its specific character conveys a moral call to love, sacrifice, building the community and the spirit of unity, giving thanks and adoration.⁵⁷

It all boils down to the fact that one of the most difficult experiences in life, which is sickness, is not experienced alone. The sick person is surrounded by special love and solidarity on the side of the Church community, which is always present and gives support in different forms of services. As Benedict XVI points out, the "Attentive pastoral care shown to those who are ill brings great spiritual benefit to the entire community, since whatever we do to one of the least of our brothers and sisters, we do to Jesus himself (cf. Mt 25:40)."⁵⁸

The aforementioned conclusion confirms both the teaching and the practices of the Church that brings spiritual guidance to the sick through indicating the deepest sense of human suffering if it is connected with the cross of Christ and offered for the Church and the salvation of the world. Accepting the suffering and finding an intention for it raises it to the status of a value. Moreover, the anointing of the sick and the prayers

⁵⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1517.

⁵⁷ Cf. J. Nagórny, *Eucharystia – we wspólnocie i dla wspólnoty*, [in:] *Eucharystia – miłość i dziękczynienie*, red. W. Słomka, A. J. Nowak, Lublin 1992, p. 123–140 (Homo Meditans, 9); J. Charytański, *Eucharystia centrum życia chrześcijańskiego*, „Ateneum Kapłańskie” 75 (1983) vol. 101, p. 397–405.

⁵⁸ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 22.

of the Church help the suffering discover the important truth that the ultimate sense of human existence lies beyond their earthly lives.

Conclusions

Salutary works of Christ are realised in the Church through the sacraments. It would be difficult to imagine the life of the Church without these holy signs. The sacraments are strongly connected with Christian life. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council *Sacrosanctum concilium* emphasises that the purpose of all the sacraments is “to sanctify men, to build up the body of Christ, and, finally, to give worship to God.”⁵⁹

Among all Church sacraments the Sacraments of Healing, namely the sacrament of penance and reconciliation and the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, have an important role, being an inseparable element of the Church identity. These two sacraments are crucial for the process of building and strengthening the Church community, which is a proof of their ecclesial character. That is why faithful fulfilment of all the obligations resulting from the sacrament of penance and the anointing of the sick is raised to evangelical value, which makes the community of unity, love and peace present in the Church. Being faithful to one’s calling and bearing witness to life, a man reconciled with God through the sacrament of penance and strengthened by the sacrament of the anointing of the sick contributes to the growth of the whole Church and her holiness. Every important aspect of the life of Church and what gives her the true meaning and dimension, can be found in the sacraments of penance and the anointing of the sick.

This paper shows how relevant the issue is with relation to the contemporary world and the contemporary situation in the Church. A problem of finding the ecclesial aspect of the sacrament of penance and the sacrament of the anointing is still open and needs to be explored. One can only

⁵⁹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 59.

hope that the observations presented in this paper will serve as a form of invitation to further and deeper analysis of the issues mentioned, and will be able to present how important the role of the sacrament of penance and the sacrament of the anointing is, both in the process of shaping the moral aspects of Christian life and building the whole Church community.

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Summary

The Dynamism of the Sacraments of Healing in the Service of Church Community Building

Inspired by the prophetic vision of Blessed John Paul, the pastors of the Church in Poland made huge efforts to ensure that the Church is becoming a real home for her children. The statement became the keynote of the Polish Pastoral Program at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. Building the Church community is of key importance for creating a common sense of fraternity, unity and peace in the world. The sacraments play a fundamental role in enhancing the process. Among all the sacraments, the so called Sacraments of Healing, namely the sacrament of penance and reconciliation and the sacrament of anointing of the sick, are of crucial importance, since they constitute an indispensable element of ecclesial identity. The article aims at showing the clearly ecclesial character of the sacrament of penance and the sacrament of the anointing. It also points out that faithful Christian fulfilment of all obligations arising from the sacraments of penance and anointing becomes the leaven of the Gospel, making the community of unity, love and peace present in the Church. Man reconciled with God in the Sacrament of Penance and strengthened in the Sacrament of the Anointing contributes to the growth of the whole Church and her holiness. Therefore, every important aspect of the life of the Church, and all that gives it the true dimension and meaning, can be found in the Sacraments of Healing.

Keywords

Church, communion, sacrament, penance and reconciliation, anointing of the sick

Streszczenie

Dynamizm sakramentów uzdrowienia w służbie budowania wspólnoty Kościoła

Pasterze Kościoła w Polsce – inspirowani proroczą wizją błogosławionego Jana Pawła – podjęli się na początku trzeciego tysiąclecia zadania urzeczywistnienia Kościoła, aby był domem dla swych dzieci. Taka jest myśl przewodnia trzyletniego Ogólnopolskiego Programu Duszpasterskiego na początku drugiej dekady XXI wieku. W budowaniu wspólnoty Kościoła fundamentalną rolę pełnią sakramenty święte. Spośród wszystkich sakramentów Kościoła ważną rolę spełniają tak zwane sakramenty uzdrowienia, czyli sakrament pokuty i pojednania oraz sakrament namaszczenia chorych. Stanowią one nieodzowny składnik kościelnej tożsamości. Są to sakramenty w szczególności sposób odpowiedzialne za tworzenie i budowanie wspólnoty Kościoła. Z publikacji wynika, że pokuta i namaszczenie mają wyraźnie charakter eklezjalny. Dlatego wierne wypełnianie przez chrześcijan wszystkich zobowiązań płynących z sakramentu pokuty i namaszczenia chorych staje się zaczynem ewangelicznym, który sprawia, że w Kościele uobecnia się wspólnota jedności, miłości i pokoju. Poprzez wierność swojemu powołaniu i świadectwo życia człowiek pojednany z Bogiem w sakramencie pokuty i umocniony przyjęciem sakramentu namaszczenia przyczynia się do wzrostu całego Kościoła i do jego świętości. Wszystko zatem, co istotne w życiu Kościoła i co nadaje mu prawdziwego wymiaru i znaczenia, można odnaleźć w sakramencie pokuty i namaszczenia.

Słowa kluczowe

Kościół, wspólnota, sakrament, pokuta i pojednanie, namaszczenie chorych

KRZYSZTOF BROSZKOWSKI OP

The Unity of the Parish and the Celebration of the Eucharist in Small Parish Communities in the Light of Recent Documents of the Magisterium of the Church

Eucharistic celebrations by small communities in a parish, often held outside the main church building, raise concerns, whether the unity of the parish is not disturbed. The reasons for those concerns are more of theological than pastoral nature and mostly relate to the communities of the Neocatechumenal Way. In order to find out if the concerns are justified in the light of the theological criteria, we will analyze selected Church documents of the 20th and the 21st century.

1. The Unity of the Eucharistic Celebration Required by the Vaticanum II Liturgical Reform

The post-conciliar Instruction, published in 1967, concerning the mystery of the Eucharist – *Eucharisticum misterium* ¹ commands to take care not to have two liturgical celebrations at the same time in the same church. The instruction emphasises that it is above all true of the celebration of the Eucharist, indicating that it distracts the people’s attention. From the context

¹ “Acta Apostolicae Sedis” 59 (1967), p. 556–557.

one may conclude that there are, however, theological aspects of this command. Point 16 of the *Instruction* presents the full and active participation of the entire people of God in the same Eucharist, around the one altar where the bishop presides as an outstanding example of common unity and as an ideal of the liturgical life of the Church. The document refers to the Paragraph 41 of the conciliar Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and Par. 26 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*. The Constitution on the Liturgy presents the problem in a way that allows to balance the theological view and the pastoral needs. The idea of the uniqueness of the Eucharist around the presiding bishop is supported in the conciliar document by the views of Ignatius of Antioch (30–107 AD) quoting his Letters to Magnesians 7, Philadelphians 4 and Smyrnaeans 8. However, point 42 of the Constitution explains the pastoral need of dividing the faithful into lesser groups “set up locally under a pastor who takes the place of the bishop,”² adding that “efforts must be made to encourage a sense of community within the parish, above all in the common celebration of the Sunday Mass.” The Constitution *Lumen Gentium* 26, also referring to the role of the bishop as the basis of the unity of local Church, mentions the fact that every Eucharistic community forms a complex reality in which “under the sacred ministry of the bishop, there is exhibited a symbol of that charity and «unity of the mystical Body, without which there can be no salvation».” The document of the Congregation for Divine Worship *Actio Pastoralis Ecclesiae*, issued in May 1969, two years after *Eucharisticum mysterium*, specified the rules of celebration in small parish groupings.³

Harmony and liturgical discipline is one of the most challenging aspects of the contemporary Church in the post-conciliar period, due to the ne-

² The account of the process of division of the Bishop Church into parishes gathered around their rectors as understood in the consciousness of the early Church was given by John D. Zizioulas in his doctoral thesis: *Eucharist, Bishop, Church. The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist. The Bishop During the First Three Centuries*, Brookline, Massachusetts 2001. The author is a professor at the Institute of Theology in Athens, a titular metropolitan of Pergamon and the co-chairman of *The Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue Between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church*.

³ “Acta Apostolicae Sedis” 61 (1969), p. 809–811.

cessity of finding balance between the theological and pastoral issues. The difficulties are caused, for example, by excessive inertia of parish practice over some issues, which can be seen in many European countries today e.g. in the common practice of giving the communion from the tabernacle, despite the strong recommendation of the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 55 Constitution for the faithful to “receive the Lord’s body from the same sacrifice” after the communion of the priest. The recommendation repeated a few times in the instruction was also placed in the Paragraph 85 of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*.⁴ The difficulty of acquiring the liturgical discipline in the post-conciliar period can also be caused by the factor opposite to inertia – private invention of the celebrants. According to Austin Flannery OP, the editor of the English edition of 20th century magisterial documents of the Church, more than one hundred documents on liturgical issues were published by the Holy See after 1964.⁵ Among the problems that required indications from the highest authority of the Church were: national languages in liturgy, concelebration and celebration in small communities. The evolution in liturgy concerning the first two issues was quite smooth. The transition from many private, individual masses said in Latin by individual priests at side altars to the widespread custom of celebrating the Eucharist in the way of con-celebration was made. It seems that it was this historically formed habit of private masses that the instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium* 17 was directed against, ordering that two liturgical celebrations cannot be held at the same time in the same church. Other detailed instructions of the Congregation point to the growing acceptance towards celebrations in smaller groupings. This fact proves that, in theological sense, these celebrations are not contradictory to church unity, but serve as important pastoral tools. In the next part of this paper we will try to find a justification of this statement in the documents of the Holy See.

⁴ Cf. *Eucharisticum mysterium* 31, 32; *Immensae caritatis*, the Instruction of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments from 29 Jan 1973, no. 2, “Acta Apostolicae Sedis” 65 (1973), p. 267–26. Cf. N. X. O’Donoghue, *Partakers of the Same Sacrifice*, “Antiphon” 16 (2012) no. 2, p. 130–143.

⁵ Cf. *Introduction*, in: *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post-conciliar Documents*, New York 1988, p. xvii.

1.1. Paschal Mystery as the Source of Unity

The document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith about the Church as the communion *Communio in notio* from 28 May 1992,⁶ signed by the then prefect Card. J. Ratzinger, contains statements, which were later incorporated in papal documents and synodal opinions of bishops on the Eucharist. One of the first statements concerns the fact that unity, which is the communion (Gr. *koinonia*) of the parish, derives from the Paschal Mystery communicated through the sacraments: Paragraph 3 “It is essential to the Christian understanding of communion that it be recognised above all as a gift from God, as a fruit of God’s initiative carried out in the paschal mystery. The new relationship between man and God, that has been established in Christ and is communicated through the sacraments, also extends to a new relationship among human beings.”

The document *Communio in notio* stresses that, since unity is a gift of God bestowed on people in sacraments, every Eucharist, even if it takes place in a small community, is a Eucharist of the catholic Church: Paragraph 10 “Moreover, one’s belonging to a particular Church never conflicts with the reality that in the Church no-one is a stranger: each member of the faithful, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, is in his or her Church, in the Church of Christ, regardless of whether or not he or she belongs, according to canon law, to the diocese, parish or other particular community where the celebration takes place.⁷ In this sense, without impinging on the necessary regulations regarding juridical dependence, whoever belongs to one particular Church belongs to all the Churches; since belonging to the Communion, like belonging to the Church, is never simply particular, but by its very nature is always universal.”⁸

⁶ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communio in notio* (28 May 1992), “Acta Apostolicae Sedis” 85 (1993), p. 838–850.

⁷ Cf. canon 107 of *The Code of Canon Law*.

⁸ John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Gospel of John*, 65, 1 (PG 59, 361): “The dweller in Rome deems the Indians a member of himself”; cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic

In the light of these words no Eucharist taking place in a small parish community is separated from other parishioners, since it is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery, the source of the communion. The Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, written by John Paul II 10 years later, specifies in more detail how the paschal unity of the parish should be understood.

1.2. Unity that the Eucharist Implies

At the beginning of the part of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (2002) which is devoted to *unity*, in Par. 20 John Paul II indicates that taking part in the Eucharist amid division has always been considered unworthy of a Christian community, even in the times when Saint Paul reprimanded the church community in Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 11: 17–22). The Pope also mentioned that through the gesture of “washing of the feet” during the Last Supper Jesus appeared as the teacher of communion and of service. It is worth noticing, that the lack of unity in the church of Corinth, brought up by the Pope, referred to the situation in which divided members of the parish community gathered together in the same room and celebrated one Eucharist (cf. 1 Cor 11: 17–22. 27–34). The source of the lack of communion that showed through not waiting for one another before beginning to eat was not the result of physical division, but the spiritual one. Consequently, in Paragraph 23 of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* John Paul II states that it is the spiritual unity with Christ that is the source of the unity of the Church: “The argument is compelling: our union with Christ, which is a gift and grace for each of us, makes it possible for us, in him, to share in the unity of his body which is the Church. The Eucharist reinforces the incorporation into Christ which took place in Baptism through the gift of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12: 13, 27).”

In the consecutive paragraphs of the Encyclical Letter the Pope continues analysing this problem, touching on and elaborating on the general thoughts of *Communio in notio*. In Paragraph 35 he points out that the communion stemming from the celebration of the Eucharist should be regarded posterior compared to the ecclesial communion, which derives

Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 13.

from the unity with Christ and has been traditionally described as being “in the state of grace.” According to the Pope, the Eucharist “presupposes that communion already exists.”

John Paul II comments on the distinction between the *visible* and the *invisible* dimension of communion, that *Communio in notio* discusses.

Invisible communion exists when individual faithful live the life of grace and practice theological virtues. It is the only way to be in communion with the Trinity and the Church. Referring to *Lumen gentium* 14 the Pope emphasises that it is not only the faith that is required, but also perseverance in sanctifying grace and love. We must remain within the Church both “bodily” and “in our heart” (Par. 36). It is clear that this invisible unity comes first and is more basic than the visible communion, which, however, also acquires its achievement through concrete bonds which are proper to its nature.

Visible communion – in the Paragraph 38 of the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* John Paul II elaborates on the definition of incorporation into the community of the Church as presented in the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium* 14. The most important conditions to become fully incorporated in the Church are “possessing the Spirit of Christ” as well as accepting the entire structure of the Church and all the means of salvation that she was given. The authority of the Supreme Pontiff and the Bishops needs to be accepted. One has to be united with them and all the other members of the Church through the bonds of “profession of faith, the sacraments, ecclesiastical government and communion”. The Pope emphasises that the Eucharist is the supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church. How does he understand the unifying reality of the Eucharist?

1.3. Unity that Results from the Eucharist

John Paul II recalls the words of Saint Augustine in order to point out that “If you are his body and members of him, then you will find set on the Lord’s table your own mystery”⁹ (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 40). In the

⁹ Saint Augustine, *Sermon* 272.

earlier fragment, quoting the words of the instruction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Communio notio*, he stresses the fact that the celebration of any local Eucharist “is performed in union not only with the proper Bishop, but also with the Pope, with the episcopal order, with all the clergy, and with the entire people. Every valid celebration of the Eucharist expresses this universal communion with Peter and with the whole Church.” The sentence itself was written in order to warn some Christian Church communities against spiritual separation (*Communio notio* 14). However, it also partly proves that the allegations of separation are unjustified: the community celebrating the Eucharist on her own, (e.g. enclosed nuns in the convent), if it celebrates the holy mysteries in a valid and worthy way, it always remains in the state of the “universal communion” with the whole Church. The fact of participation in the Eucharist, either in bigger groups or separately, in many smaller groups, is not, according to the dogmatic teaching of the Church, the determining factor of the ecclesial communion or its lack.

In the Paragraph 52 of the *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* the Pope indicates that the communion, the unity of the whole community with the universal Church is guaranteed by the priest celebrating the Eucharist. Presiding at the Eucharist, the priest is responsible for doing it *in persona Christi* and must “provide a witness to and a service of communion not only for the community directly taking part in the celebration, but also for the universal Church, which is a part of every Eucharist.” John Paul II reminds about this truth in order to warn against making the celebration of the Eucharist a private event, and especially against introducing unauthorised changes. However, the rule itself can also serve as proof that through the celebration of the Eucharist separately, the community does not become a parallel church.

1.4. Sociological Unity and the Unity of Faith

In the synodal *Instrumentum laboris*¹⁰ on the Eucharist, a working document, which was created in October 2005 and is the result of the Holy See’s

¹⁰ Cf. Synod of Bishops, XI Ordinary General Assembly (2005), *The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church – Instrumentum laboris*.

consultations with episcopates of the world, there is a comment that in some church communities, primarily in western European countries enjoying a general climate of peace and prosperity, we can observe a decrease in the theological and spiritual understanding of the unity of the Eucharist. Instead, external criteria of the unity are emphasized. Eucharist, as the document implies, should change human lives in a spiritual way, with the power of the Paschal Mystery: “Many mention that the idea of participation is often limited to its exterior aspects. Not everyone understands that its true meaning comes from faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Participation in the Eucharist is rightly seen as the quintessential act in the Church’s life. It is communion with Trinitarian life: God the Father, the incarnate and risen Son of God and the Holy Spirit, who works the transformation and the “divinization” of human life” (*Instrumentum laboris* 25).

Among the attitudes which hinder proper understanding of the unity of the Eucharist, the document mentions the incorrect interpretation of the theological significance of liturgy as creating Christ. The truth is, that, in order to become the Body of Christ, the liturgy must accept Him as the source of unity: “It is widely held that Christ’s presence is the result of the community and not Christ himself, who is the font and centre of our communion and head of his Body, the Church” (*Instrumentum laboris* 27).

Instrumentum laboris also draws attention to the huge role of the profession of faith, which is an important bond reaffirming the communion with other Church communities: “Before partaking of the Eucharist, the profession of faith is renewed. This fundamental bond manifests the communion of each particular Church with the local Churches throughout the world, and also the primary union with the Church of Rome and its Bishop, the necessary principle of the Church’s unity” (*Instrumentum laboris* 32).

This sentence brings to mind an ancient rule, according to which the measure of the unity of a particular church community and its members with the universal Church was the Creed it professed – the faith in which it baptised its new members.¹¹ In the context of the Eucharist, the synodal

¹¹ Cf. B. Neunheuser, *Baptism and confirmation*, trans. by J. J. Hughes, Freiburg 1964, p. 137–139; J. Day, *The Baptismal Liturgy of Jerusalem. Fourth and Fifth-Century Evidence*

working document points out a negative tendency in western countries, where the understanding of the Eucharist and its unifying character is being limited to its social dimension of a meal of fellowship. Instead, in countries experiencing wars and other difficulties, the Eucharistic mystery is understood more fully, as the paschal mystery celebrated in an unbloody manner on the altar.¹²

If we perceive the Eucharist primarily as “a meal of fellowship,” which understands the unity as the physical presence of all parishioners, then regular separate celebrations of the Eucharist in particular groups must be seen as opposing the sense of fellowship understood in this way. However, this criterion is an inappropriate, too “external” one. This viewpoint of *Instrumentum laboris* was confirmed during the Synod itself. Paragraph 64 of the post-synodal exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* is devoted to the need of acquainting the parishioners with the Paschal Mystery. The Pope indicates that the basic structure of the Christian experience calls for a process of mystagogy which should always respect three elements: the interpretation of the rites in the light of our salvation, presentation of the meaning of signs contained in the rites, and connecting the rites to Christian life. With that in mind, as the Pope emphasised, there is a need for “greater involvement by communities of consecrated life, movements and groups which, by their specific charisms, can give new impetus to Christian formation” (*Sacramentum caritatis* 64).

As we can see, according to the *Magisterium*, expressed in the teaching of the Vatican council, the synod and the documents of CDF, the unity of the parish ought to be understood primarily in the dimension of faith, and not sociology. It means that the unity among the parishioners is built and strengthened when they are helped to live more profoundly the *Paschal mystery* celebrated in sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist. It's the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ that are the source of Christian unity. According to the aforementioned documents, establishing smaller parish communities is, paradoxically, beneficial for the growth of the unity among the parishioners and rooting them in the parish. It

from *Palestine Syria and Egypt*, Aldershot 2007, p. 57.

¹² *Instrumentum laboris*, 33

is because of the role small parish communities play in the initiation of the faithful into the mystery of the Passover. The process called by Pope Francis mystical initiation (cf. *Evangelii gaudium* 166).

2. The Word of God and Small Communities

In the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (2010), issued after the Synod on the Word of God (2008), Pope Benedict XVI focuses on the problem of introducing the parishioners to regular, personal encounters with “Christ, who gives himself to us in his word” (*Verbum Domini* 73). In the opinion of the Pope, the biblical apostolate ought to have a central position in the pastoral activity of parishes.¹³ The Holy Father pointed out that not only is the parish life the first environment for “the proclamation, hearing and celebration of the word of God,” but also shows the incredible value of the pastoral care “in the Christian communities as the proper setting where a personal and communal journey based on the word of God can occur and truly serve as the basis for our spiritual life” (*Verbum Domini* 72). Because of that, “it is good that pastoral activity also favour the growth of *small communities*, “formed by families or based in parishes or linked to the different ecclesial movements and new communities” (Propositio 21), which can help to promote formation, prayer and knowledge of the Bible in accordance with the Church’s faith” (*Verbum Domini* 73). It seems quite clear that the Pope’s words also relate to the Neocatechumenal Way, which he is familiar with since when he worked

¹³ In *Verbum Domini* we can read that: “Along these lines the Synod called for a particular pastoral commitment to emphasizing the centrality of the word of God in the Church’s life, and recommended a greater “biblical apostolate,” not alongside other forms of pastoral work, but as *a means of letting the Bible inspire all pastoral work*” (Propositio 30; cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei verbum*, 24). This does not mean adding a meeting here or there in parishes or dioceses, but rather of examining the ordinary activities of Christian communities, in parishes, associations and movements, to see if they are truly concerned with fostering a personal encounter with Christ, who gives himself to us in his word” (73).

in Tübingen. One of the three basic elements of the Neocatechumenate, constituting the “Christian tripod” (Word of God – Liturgy – Community), is a programme of bringing the parishioners closer to the word of God, in the context of liturgical celebration and community life.

The charism of Neocatechumenate in the context of parish life was highly spoken about by a Spanish Cardinal, who is the current Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Antonio Cañizares Llovera. The cardinal wrote about it in a short article for the Spanish weekly “La Razón:” “The Word of God, the Eucharist, baptism, received or to be received, and the Christian community, are the core of the itinerary of the growth of faith, which is accompanied by not strictly liturgical celebrations on its every stage. The Sunday Eucharist, usually anticipated on a Saturday night in neocatechumenal communities, is «the soul and strength» of the whole Way. The celebration of the Eucharist, performed within the proper itinerary of these communities, celebrated with the highest dignity, with the sense of «mystery and sacrum», in the spirit of the Church and liturgy. The Word of God and the Eucharist indicate God’s priority and form the basis that gives life, strength, capacity and enthusiasm to communities to enable them to give testimony of their faith.”¹⁴

In his interview for the Vatican Radio, as indicated by the Italian daily “La Stampa,” Card. Cañizares emphasised the importance of the Way as the tool for Christian initiation. The Prefect of the Congregation claims that the Neocatechumenate shows how to avoid situations in which catechetical formation takes place only in the intellectual dimension. According to Cañizares the relation between the liturgy and catechesis in the Neocatechumenal Way may serve as a model.¹⁵

¹⁴ See *Un aire fresco por Cardenal Antonio Cañizares*, “La Razón” 21 Jan 2012, author’s translation, the original text available at: http://www.larazon.es/detalle_hemeroteca/noticias/LA_RAZON_428538/historico/2533-un-aire-fresco-por-cardenal-antonio-canizares (18/03/2013).

¹⁵ Cf. *Cardinale Canizares: Neocatecumenali bene rapporto tra catechesi e liturgia*, “La Stampa” 23 Jan 2012, <http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/vaticano/dettaglio-articolo/articolo/canizares-neocatecumenali-news-catecumenals-catecumenales-11940/> (18/03/2013).

The charism of the Neocatechumenate was earlier accepted by Pope John Paul II. In his letter about the Way written in August 1990 he pointed out a relation between the ability to put oneself at the service of the renewal of the Church and the participation of those who walk along the Neocatechumenal Way in small communities and the celebration of the Eucharist in groups. The Pope indicated that it is the communal dimension of the Neocatechumenal formation that their readiness to serve the Church derives from.¹⁶

During his audience on 20 January 2012, in his address given to the catechists, the families constituting missionary parishes called *Missio ad gentes*, and communities of the Way which had completed the neocatechumenal itinerary, Pope Benedict XVI confirmed the importance of the celebration of the Eucharist in Neocatechumenal communities. The Pope reminded art. 13 § 2 of the Statute of the Way, which states that it helps to promote the rapprochement to the wealth of the sacramental life by people who have strayed from the Church, or have not received adequate training.¹⁷

Article 22 of the Statutes of the Neocatechumenal Way says that having completed the itinerary of rediscovery of Christian initiation, a particular community continues the weekly celebration of the Word and the Dominical Eucharist. According to the Statutes it is a crucial element of the ongoing formation in the faith directed to the members of the parish. But also because the Eucharist is a source of pastoral productivity of a given community, the activity of which is a part of the parish itself. The fruits of evangelization of these communities come from Christian *love and unity* present among them. Jesus taught that it is love for one another that will show that Christians are His disciples (cf. Jn 13: 34–35; 17: 21). The signs of love and unity are not that visible in general parish celebrations, since the parishioners do not know each other that well and meet in church rarely. Small parish communities make it possible to go

¹⁶ Cf. John Paul II, the Letter *Ognivolta*, 30 Aug 1990; AAS 82 (1990), p. 1513 – 1515, <http://www.camminoneocatecumenale.it/new/papa.asp?id=111&a=23> (18/03/2013).

¹⁷ Cf. *Pope's Address to Neocatechumenal Way*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2012/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120120_cammino-neocatecumenale_en.html (18/03/2013).

beyond the limits of anonymity and implement fraternal love in particular relationships with particular people on the regular basis. Real human relationships are the test of the Christian love and unity, which becomes a clear witness for those who strayed from the faith. This is also a way of realising the wish of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 42 to “encourage a sense of community within the parish.”

3. What Do the Statistics Say?

In order to present the situation concerning the initiation of the parishioners in the life nourished by the Word of God and the Paschal Mystery in the common pastoral care 40 years after the Council, I would like to refer to the data provided by sociologists, since we assume, in accordance with the teaching of *Magisterium*, that the degree of unity of particular parishioners as well as different parish communities is proportional to their real bond with the most important mysteries of the faith. The research on the level of religiosity among Catholics provides us with information concerning that matter.

3.1. Sunday Listening to the Word of God

We will begin with the presentation of the results of research on social and religious attitudes, conducted in the diocese of Płock in 2010 by the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church SAC.¹⁸ Almost 93% of respondents declared to be believers. Asked about children’s upbringing in faith, 88% of respondents answered that children ought to be taught the religion by their parents. When specifying the best way of achieving this goal only 0.5% marked: read the Bible together. Common prayer with the child received 10.8% of votes, and 6.2% of respondents wanted to talk to their children about religious matters. These results clearly indicate that

¹⁸ Cf. *Postawy religijno-społeczne mieszkańców diecezji płockiej. Raport z badań przeprowadzonych przez Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego SAC*, red. L. Adamczuk, W. Zdaniewicz, Płock 2010.

the Holy Bible has no significant place in the domestic religious formation. Very few respondents (1.2%) thought that “encouraging the child to participate in religious youth communities” is a helpful tool. Among the most commonly selected answers were: go to church with the child and participate in a mass – 19.7%; “send the child to church” – 12.3%. So the service in church was chosen by 32% of respondents. A slightly smaller number of people wanted to “send the child to religion classes” – 18.8%; and 16.7% wanted to “set an example of one’s own religiosity on everyday basis.” In order to present this “own religiosity,” let us take a look at the attitudes to sex and marriage: 42.7% of respondents finds sexual intercourse before marriage acceptable, most probably among them we can find the 29.2% accepting open relationships and the 18.5% accepting the so called “free love” – apparently these respondents, the great majority of whom describes themselves as “believers,” do not find sexual intercourse outside marriage to be the sin against the sixth commandment. Almost every second respondent approves of contraceptives – 43.5%, and about 60% of respondents are in favour of the *in vitro* fertilisation procedures.¹⁹ If these results can lead to any conclusions, then they obviously must be connected with the subjective perception of faith. A declared reference point of the religious and moral beliefs is, to a large extent, the presence in church on a Sunday mass. The personal bond with the word of God does not seem to be any reference point for believers (0.5%). As far as the Catholic sexual ethics is concerned, the opinions of Catholics are not formed by the Sunday mass readings or sermons, but rather newspapers, the TV, the cinema and the Internet. And by no means are they the Catholic ones, but the ones being the advocates of what Saint John refers to as “the world”: “Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world (Douay-Rheims)” (1 Jn 2: 15–16).

¹⁹ Cf. J. Kamiński, *Przygotowanie do małżeństwa i życia w rodzinie w Diecezji Płockiej*, „Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny” 19 (2011) no. 2, p. 122–124.

There are cases of priests themselves who undervalue the significance of sins concerning sexual ethics. An example of this are the views of Father Andrzej Bohdanowicz SThD, which are in opposition to the teaching of *Magisterium*, and were presented a few years ago in a Warsaw theological magazine "Collectanea Theologica."²⁰ The opinions presented by him contradict the moral judgement of disordered sexual acts specified in the Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics *Persona Humana* 9 of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from 1975.²¹

This situation of life in faith in the Mazovia region, in one of the oldest dioceses in Poland is most probably representative of the situation in other regions as well. It shows how important it is, that the voice of the Pope and bishops, calling for the initiation of the faithful into the Word of God with the use of the post-conciliar realities, be heard. The author of the article on the preparation to marriage that the statistical data was taken from, refers to the *Directory for the Pastoral Care of the Family* no. 23 of the Polish Episcopal Conference,²² which indicates that more attention needs to be paid to creating small groups, movements, associations

²⁰ See: A. Bohdanowicz, *Postulat teologii, «z którą można żyć» Karla Rahnera a posoborowa refleksja nad miłością małżeńską*, „Collectanea Theologica” 77 (2007) no. 2, p. 57–68.

²¹ In Par. 9 of the Declaration we read: “The traditional Catholic doctrine that masturbation constitutes a grave moral disorder is often called into doubt or expressly denied today. It is said that psychology and sociology show that it is a normal phenomenon of sexual development, especially among the young. It is stated that there is real and serious fault only in the measure that the subject deliberately indulges in solitary pleasure closed in on self (“ipsation”), because in this case the act would indeed be radically opposed to the loving communion between persons of different sex which some hold is what is principally sought in the use of the sexual faculty. This opinion is contradictory to the teaching and pastoral practice of the Catholic Church. Whatever the force of certain arguments of a biological and philosophical nature, which have sometimes been used by theologians, in fact both the *Magisterium* of the Church – in the course of a constant tradition – and the moral sense of the faithful have declared without hesitation that masturbation is an intrinsically and seriously disordered act.”

²² Polish Episcopal Conference, *Directory for the Pastoral Care of the Family*, Warszawa 2003.

and communities for the young, which promote Christian values and the Christian model of life, building the foundation for future marriages and families.²³ The Pope and the bishops point to small communities as tools, perceiving them as a gift of God for our times. Accepting these realities as a gift and a task to be fulfilled depends solely on priests and attitudes adopted by them.

3.2. Sunday Parish Mass

Polish statistics concerning people who go to church and receive communion on Sundays show that Catholics in Poland act accordingly to their beliefs. Out of the 41% of people attending Sunday mass, merely 16.4% receive communion. In the Tarnów diocese, where Sunday mass attendance is the highest – 70.5%, the number of people who receive communion will be up to 23.1% and it is the highest number of people who receive communion among Sunday church-goers in Poland. The smallest percentage of people who receive communion on the Sunday was found in the Szczecin diocese – 10.6%.²⁴ If, at best, every fourth church-goer receives communion, it is difficult to assume that, by going to Sunday mass only, the parishioners are truly united around the Paschal Mystery (cf. John Paul II, *Dies Domini* 40).

The initiation, both in the Eucharist and the Word of God seems to be a necessity, due to the non-Christian influence on the sexual ethics of Catholics. Without it, it will not take long for the parishes to shrink, as was the case in many western European countries. Lower mass attendance of young Catholics in Italy was subject to research by Italian demographers. The conclusions from their detailed analysis of the problem indicate that the experience of sexual initiation outside marriage among young Italians, which is referred to as “adultery” in the language of moral theology, consequently draws them away from attending Sunday mass. The authors concluded that in this respect the Italians are different from

²³ Cf. J. Kamiński, *Przygotowanie do małżeństwa i życia w rodzinie w Diecezji Płockiej*.

²⁴ Data from the website of the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church SAC in Poland: <http://iskk.pl/kosciolnaswiecie.html> (29/01/2012).

the Americans. They consider the clear moral message that the Italian society, being homogeneously Catholic, receives, and their proximity to the Pope and accessibility of his teaching, to be the reason for this situation.²⁵ However, according to Andrew Greeley, a well-read Catholic priest, a professor of sociology from Chicago and a supporter of birth control, as far as American Catholics are concerned, the results of the research are similar to the Italian ones in terms of mass attendance.²⁶ The difference between the two societies is that, in the case of the American Catholics, the fact of not going to church on Sunday is not caused by the sense of shame and sin. Quite the opposite – its reason is the indifference to the sin itself. The questionnaire conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in 1963 and 1974 (the so called Catholic School Studies) showed that practising Catholics stopped perceiving contraception as a sin. For example, in 1974 about 80% of women in their mid-thirties, going to communion often, found nothing wrong in birth control i.e. the contraception of various kind. Even more American Catholic women at that age, more than 80%, thought that sexual intercourse only for the sake of pleasure, therefore, excluding the element of procreation, was acceptable.²⁷ The same author comments on the problem of lower mass attendance on Sundays in America (the decrease from 72% to 50%). The parish priests see the situation in a way that the churches, once full, have now become half empty. According to research of the Gallup Institute, the decrease occurred mostly after the publication of the *Humanae vitae* encyclical in 1968 by Pope Paul VI. Greeley explains that together with the decision to reject the official sexual ethics proclaimed by the Church,

²⁵ M. Caltabiano, G. Dalla Zuanna, A. Rosina, *Interdependence between sexual debut and church attendance in Italy*, “Demographic Research” 14 (2006), p. 471. The article (no. 19) can be downloaded from the website of the magazine published by the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research, Rostock, Germany: <http://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol14/19/14-19.pdf> (18/01/2013).

²⁶ According to publishers’ data from 1994, Greeley published 120 books, 20 of which were fiction, with the total circulation of 20 million.

²⁷ Cf. A. Greeley, *Sex. The Catholic Experience*, Allen, Texas 1994, p. 47–48 and tables 5 and 7 on p. 55–57.

also missing out the Sunday Eucharist stopped being perceived by the faithful as a grave sin.”²⁸

Faced with the aforementioned data we must clearly state that the mentality of the majority of church-goers needs to be re-evangelised. The quoted author seems to take no notice of this challenge. He is rather supporting the idea that it is better not to “trouble the consciences of the laity.”²⁹ The confessors’ attitude of not troubling the consciences, which meant not enquiring about the ethical aspects of their intercourse, was, according to Greeney, very common at the beginning of the 20th century and resulted from the indications of Alphonsus Maria de Liguori and John Vianney. In the understanding of the American theologian that meant, in practice, a go ahead for joy and spontaneity, enjoyment of life and each other’s company in marital intercourse. It would be a wise attitude, except that, in this case, enjoyment does not take objective moral norms into consideration. All the joys of this world become curses, when they draw us away from God, prayer and righteousness. Jesus himself said: “Woe to you who laugh now, for you will grieve and weep” (Lk 6:25). And saint John added: “Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 Jn 2:15).

According to a sociologist Gianpiero Dalla Zuanna from the University of Padua, northern Italy, the initial approach of not troubling the consciences resulted in the inability of reaching the consciences at all when encyclical *Casti Connubii* was issued in 1930 and attempts to improve ethical formation of married couples were made. Long standing pastoral activity of the Italian bishops and priests from the region of Veneto (around Venice), described by Gianpiero Dalla Zuanna, shows the ineffectiveness of the pastoral activity through the confessional. The priests did not manage to persuade their parishioners to change their life attitudes.

²⁸ *Children of the Council*, “America. The Catholic Weekly” 190 (2004) no. 19.

²⁹ A. Greeney criticises the approach of Pope Pius XI to priests who decided not to “trouble the consciences of the laity” with Church views on contraception, claiming that the demographic changes at the beginning of the 20th century have influenced many countries to the extent in which contraception has become extremely common; cf. *Sex. The Catholic Experience*, op. cit., p. 39.

The failure of their ethical impact was also seen clearly through the decline of the total fertility rate. The number of children in the families of this region dropped from the average of five to below the reproducibility of generations.³⁰ The process was accompanied by strong secularisation of the society and the decline in Sunday mass attendance.

In the face of this situation, re-evangelisation of the parishioners through the Christian initiation in small communities, as papal documents indicate, instead of posing danger to the unity of the parish, seems to be its providential chance. Thanks to small communities, the parish can gain back its mission of sanctifying and unifying around the Paschal Mystery – as regards both, practising Catholics and the lost sheep.

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Summary

The Unity of the Parish and the Celebration of the Eucharist in Small Parish Communities in the Light of Recent Documents of the Magisterium of the Church

The author analyses the problem of parish unity faced with separate Eucharistic celebrations organised by small communities existing in a parish. He tries to formulate theological principles of that unity in the light of the Magisterial documents of 20th and 21st century. The unity of a parish is most importantly connected with the spiritual, invisible dimension, which is also expressed in the external, visible way by bonds of profession of faith, sacraments, Church hierarchy, and communion. Unity between parishioners is built by initiating them into the Paschal Mystery and into daily meditation of the Word of God. Instead of seeing in them a threat to unity, both John Paul II and Benedict XVI indicate that small communities participate in the process of strengthening the unity of the parish by leading people along the mystagogical way towards the initiation into the

³⁰ Cf. *Bassa fecondità e nuova mentalità. Controllo delle nascite e religione nel Veneto nel Novecento*, Padova University Press 2010; cf. Sandro Magister, “Ego te absolvo.” *The Catholic Route to Birth Control*, <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1344650?eng=y> (18/03/2013).

Paschal Mystery. The author also refers to sociological data about religiosity in contemporary Polish parishes indicating that there is a serious crisis in the life of faith and a dire need for the communities as a means of Christian initiation.

Keywords

Liturgical reform, Second Vatican Council, Neocatechumenal Way, Eucharist, unity of the parish, Magisterium, Christian initiation

Streszczenie

Jedność parafii a celebrowanie Eucharystii w małych wspólnotach w parafii w świetle najnowszych dokumentów Kościoła

Autor analizuje zauważane przez niektórych duszpasterzy napięcie pomiędzy celebrowaniem Eucharystii w małych wspólnotach istniejących w parafiach a jednością parafii jako całości oraz teologiczne zasady tej jedności w świetle wybranych wypowiedzi Magisterium Kościoła XX i XXI wieku. Analiza tekstów Magisterium wskazała, że jedność parafii ma wymiar najpierw duchowy, niewidzialny, a następnie także zewnętrzny, widzialny. Konstytuują ją przede wszystkim więzy wyznania wiary, sakramentów, kościelnej hierarchii oraz komunii. Jedność między parafianami buduje się poprzez wtajemniczenie ich w Misterium paschalne oraz w codzienne obcowanie ze Słowem Bożym. W myśl nauczania papieża Jana Pawła II i Benedykta XVI małe wspólnoty zamiast zagrażać jedności parafii, mogą przyczynić się do umocnienia jej jedności poprzez prowadzenie parafian do zjednoczenia z Misterium paschalnym. Wnioski teologiczne autor uzupełnił wynikami badań socjologicznych stanu religijności osób świeckich w parafiach, które sygnalizują poważny kryzys życia wiary i moralności oraz potrzebę sięgania po małe wspólnoty jako środowisko formacyjne i narzędzie wtajemniczenia chrześcijańskiego dorosłych.

Słowa kluczowe

Reforma liturgiczna, Sobór Watykański II, Droga Neokatechumenalna, Eucharystia, jedność parafii, Magisterium Kościoła, wtajemniczenie chrześcijańskie

RECENZJE · REVIEWS

TOMASZ MARIA DĄBEK OSB

Marek Piotr Chojnacki OCist., *Sacramentis Ecclesiae communicare. Chrzest i Eucharystia jako sakramentalne źródła życia chrześcijańskiego według świętego Bernarda z Clairvaux*, tłum. M. Małecka, G. Małecka, Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów TYNIEC, Kraków 2012, 476 pp. (Źródła Monastyczne, 59)

The doctoral thesis, originally published in Italian in 2003 in Rome, is a deep elaboration on the teachings of St. Bernard on the subjects crucial for dogmatics, liturgics, spiritual life in general, especially in monastic circles.

The dissertation is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the historical and intellectual context of the thought of St. Bernard concerning sacramental identity. It consists of two chapters. The first one is devoted to St. Bernard of Clairvaux as a representative of Monastic Theology. The term, discussed by J. Leclercq in more detail, shows the difference between the approach to explaining and deliberating on religious issues between the authors from monastic circles, who in a way follow the methods of the Church Fathers, elaborating on problems with reference to the Holy Scripture; and scholastic authors, who use methods based on logic and scholarly systems of argumentation. The author characterises the Renaissance of the 12th century and, in its stream, St. Bernard, who is presented as a theologian and a master responding to the expectations

of his time in the light of contemporary research. In the second chapter the liturgical and sacramental context of the development of St. Bernard's theological thought is presented: the liturgical aspect of *The Rule of Saint Benedict* as the fundament of the sacramentological thought of St. Bernard, the liturgical ambience of the time and the Cistercian Order, as well as main sacramental concepts of that period.

Part two comprises of the analysis of St. Bernard's text concerning Baptism and the Eucharist. It consists of two chapters focusing on the afore – mentioned sacraments. Baptism for St. Bernard is a ritual source of Christian life, which he presents discussing the need of the sacrament of faith, which is the sacrament of righteousness and salvation, and its meaning in Christian life. In chapter four, being the second chapter of this part of the work, he presents the Eucharist as the ritual source of spiritual and moral life of Christians on their way to God, the ritual source of life of the redeemed human being, moral and social life of Christians.

The third and last part of the text is the evaluation of the Baptismal and Eucharistic theology of St. Bernard and the presentation of its current significance. It contains one chapter presenting the unity of the Eucharist and Baptism with the spiritual and ethical life of man: the summary of St. Bernard's approach to the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, as well as the outline of Bernard's reflection on the two sacraments. It shows the thoughts shaped in the Middle Ages, but open to issues universally referring to life and enhancing the ecumenical dialogue, also in the contemporary world.

The paper finishes with conclusions accurately summarising its individual chapters. The vast bibliography shows the author's diligence and conscientiousness. The Biblical Index helps identify the texts used by St. Bernard with ease. The reader can also reach for the Indices of St. Bernard's works and proper names.

The author's work and assignments made it impossible for him to translate the text himself. The translators used clear, comprehensible and theologically correct language in their work. A slight drawback for the Polish reader is the lack of information on Polish translations of texts used in other languages.

This valuable dissertation gives new insight into St. Bernard's sacramentological thought and its reference to Christian life. It emphasises the significance of liturgical acts and their consequences. It reminds that the sacrament of Baptism and the sacrament of the Eucharist are the bases of the way along which Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, leads us to the house of the Father.

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