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ARTYKUŁY W JĘZYKU ANGIELSKIM

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HUMAN DRAMA IN THE LIGHT OF THE PASTORAL THEOLOGY

Pastoral care of the Church demands a solid theoretical foundation, which is a fundamental task for the Pastoral Theology. This branch of Theology explores the Revelation and the Tradition of the People of God reflected by different cultures and united by the same faith¹. Galileo taught that Scripture and nature both come from God's Word: the Scripture as a dictated by the Holy Spirit, and the nature created by the order of God. According to the famous Astronomer the true Faith and true science can never contradict each other². This idea is also included in the teaching of Vatican II: "Therefore if methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out (...) in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God"³.

Within pastoral Theology there has been evolving an Ecclesiology which can be called a "Theory of the Body of the Church". It is an ecclesial Theology of a community, and "nobody, therefore, can make of theology as it were a simple collection of his own personal ideas, but everybody must be aware of being in close union with the mission of teaching truth for which the Church is responsible"⁴.

The Church lives and carries out her own ministry as well as meets her task as "Body". This "Body" is to be meant not only in a mystical

¹ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, 101.

² From Galileo's letter to his friend, an Italian mathematician and abbot at the Benedictine monastery in Monte Cassino, December 21, 1613.

³ Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 36.

⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, 19.

sense, but also physically. When a Christian professes faith in the Church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, then he or she puts himself or herself into direct relationship to the community gathered in the name of Christ. The members of the Church remain however ordinary, sinful people, unfortunately. Pope Benedict XVI referred to it, speaking to the priests in the Cathedral of Warsaw: “We believe that the Church is holy, but that there are sinners among her members. We need to reject the desire to identify only with those who are sinless. How could the Church have excluded sinners from her ranks? It is for their salvation that Jesus took flesh, died and rose again”⁵.

We must recognize that we are all sinners and we together comprise a community of sinners which makes a significant contribution to the approach of the Church toward every person. First of all, the admonition of Christ not to judge other people must be seriously taken into consideration: No one has the right to judge another human being. Benedict XVI made it clear in his same speech: “Yet we must guard against the arrogant claim of setting ourselves up to judge earlier generations, who lived in different times and different circumstances. Humble sincerity is needed in order not to deny the sins of the past, and at the same time not to indulge in facile accusations in the absence of real evidence or without regard for the different preconceptions of the time. Moreover, the *confessio peccati*, to use an expression of Saint Augustine, must always be accompanied by the *confessio laudis* – the confession of praise. As we ask pardon for the wrong that was done in the past, we must also remember the good accomplished with the help of divine grace which, even if contained in earthenware vessels, has borne fruit that is often excellent”⁶.

The value and relevance of these words reveal a new effect today, when Poland is still experiencing the trauma associated with the death of our President Lech Kaczynski, his wife and ninety four of prominent Poles killed in a crash plane in Russia, April 10, 2010. Most of them were Catholics, many involved in the life of the Church. They all shared Polish nationality and Polish identity, similarly understood and experienced, however they had different vision of Poland in Europe and in the world.

⁵ Benedict XVI, Meeting with the Clergy in Warsaw, Poland, May 25, 2006.

⁶ Ibid.

From the faith perspective, the tragic death of Poles near the airport of Smolensk was not a meaningless event. The question “why”, asked many times after the crash, remains without answer because human wisdom does not meet the plans of Divine Providence. Neither God nor the Poles condemned to death those who tragically died. The explanation, therefore, even with the most meticulous of analysis of this disaster will not help answer the question “why”? At most, we hope to find out one day: “how” this happened?

So if there is no answer to the question “why”, how to explain the meaning of this event? Let us call in here again the words of Benedict XVI: “As we ask pardon for the wrong that was done in the past, we must also remember the good accomplished with the help of divine grace which, even if contained in earthenware vessels, has borne fruit that is often excellent”⁷. These earthenware vessels of human bodies were literally destroyed in the plane crash, but by the grace of God their tragic death should bear fruit for the benefit of the community of the Church, as well as for the Polish nation.

Many people see in the tragic death of our compatriots their sacrifice for something good. It was certainly not a voluntary sacrifice, but their death entered the saving plans of Divine Providence. Such a death understood as sacrifice can not be humanly planned, prepared or directed. For such a sacrifice is not a human scenario and so any quest for the meaning of it is not an easy task. Nevertheless, in my opinion, Pastoral Theology cannot stay away from searching for the value and the meaning of the event.

First we should recall one important tenet of the Pastoral Theology: the redemptive plan of God can be studied in what is human and what is revealed from God. On this basis, Pastoral Theology leads to a scientific reflection on the daily growth of the Church in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the history context⁸.

The concept of “history” in Pastoral Theology focuses on the present. Of course, what is happening now has its past and also the future. In this context, the past can be defined as the “present just beforehand”, and the future as the “present only later”. The history context in pastoral

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, 57.

studies means therefore the world in direct relationship to the Church. The world has its own history and the Church has her own traditions. These two realities merge in the concept of history, which is used by Pastoral Theology. The history of the Church and the history of the world begin in the act of creation. Jesus connects them together in the Incarnation and Redemption by making world's history and the history of the Church one History of Salvation⁹.

For the Pastoral Theology the concept of history is therefore not only made by facts and events; it is primarily the work of God, the Lord of history. In this perspective, even the tragedy of Smolensk makes part of the History of Salvation. The death of the Polish elite, with the President of the Republic, has its meaning in the History of Salvation. For someone who sees history only as a sequential happening of events without any providential, active presence of God, this concept has clearly no sense and no academic value. Instead for Pastoral Theology this is a part of the universal truth and certainly belongs to the History of Salvation.

The historical context is also one of the components of a pastoral paradigm. A Practical Theology formulates paradigms as certain patterns of actions, which may be called prototypes. The task of the Pastoral Theology is to show how to set the salvific mission of the Church in history. The proposed models (prototypes) of solutions are complex. The paradigm is made up by various factors. First of all, there are theological assumptions (standards), which generally can be called Pastoral Ecclesiology. The second "component" is *Kairos*, which are – in our case – results of an empirical research. Paradigms, drawn from the theological interpretation of these results, must also take into account the historical perspective because the Church has a tradition, as well as futurological prospective, providing for the development of various contingencies of the current situation. Finally, in the paradigm must be clearly highlighted the role of Providence in directing the history of the Church, the world and humanity (God's grace in action), considering also human effort and work. In the paradigm, so one can identify patterns, prototypes, methods, proposals which all belong to

⁹ Cf. J.K. Przybyłowski, *Funkcja wychowawcza w teorii i praktyce eklezjalnej. Studium teologicznopastoralne*, Warszawa 2010, 17.

a time category. In general they can be defined as “present” or “current situation”. There is also a practical category which provides examples of solutions for fundamental problems of the contemporary Church, taking into account the achievement of formal theory of human action (Praxeology) in general¹⁰.

This complexity must be taken into consideration to interpret human events. Pastoral Theology has then methodical instruments to explain the meaning of our national tragedy. This event should be seen historically in fact, it took place at a certain place and time, but it must be interpreted only with the help of Revelation. This event is also a personal history of each of its participants, with personal story of sin and grace of each of them. The end of the natural history of each of the victims of this tragedy is the death. If, however, the death of all the victims is considered in its theological dimension, which is God’s providential plan for them and for Poland, then it becomes part of the history of salvation, in which the Church lives and works. Such a death is a pledge of future glory. In this death God’s saving grace produces fruits.

This tragedy also allows us to see human action in relationship with God. Every man and every woman has in fact his or her plans, dreams, expectations and needs. Meanwhile, it is Providence who determines the final importance of each human effort and all human creativity. In all aspects Divine Providence must be taken into account. The same applies to any theoretical analysis. Pastoral Theology does not provide the remedy but only points the way which leads to salvation. Pastoral plans are the result of academic discussion, but God decides what eventually happens and determines providential meaning of events.

SUMMARY

Pastoral ministry of the Church demands a solid theoretical foundation. Within Pastoral Theology exists an Ecclesiology, which can be called “Theory of the body of the Church”. Awareness of being part of a community of sinners determines certain attitude. First of all, the admonition of Christ not to judge other people must be seriously taken into consideration: No one has the right to judge another human being. The tragic death of our compatriots in the plane crash in Russia

¹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 38.

can be seen somehow as sacrifice. Such a sacrifice was certainly not voluntary and nobody planned it. If, however, once unfortunately happen, it can be examined with the help of the Pastoral Theology in order to discover its value and meaning. The historical context is one of the components of pastoral paradigm. In Practical Theology there are formulated paradigms as certain patterns of actions, which may be called prototypes. The complexity of the methodology of the Pastoral Theology offers a light to interpret human events. The full meaning of the tragic event can be discovered only in consideration of God's providential presence in human history.