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ECCLESIALITY AND HUMAN SOCIALIZATION IN THE ASPECT OF APPLIED THEOLOGY

Abstract

Applied theology is the scientific reflection on the daily “growth” of man, who lives every day in the world and there fulfils himself and realizes his existential vocation, and Christians build the Kingdom of God. From the perspective of applied theology, three main principles can be distinguished that link ecclesiology and socialization: respect for truth, social justice and charity. In applied theology, it is possible to undertake scientific reflection on ecclesiology without violating pastoral theology’s right to study the Church and its salvific mission. However, in the search for knowledge about the dimensions of human social life, authoritarian and abstract universalism should be avoided.

Keywords: pastoral theology, applied theology, ecclesiality, socialization

EKLEZJALNOŚĆ I SOCJALIZACJA CZŁOWIEKA W ASPEKCIE TEOLOGII STOSOWANEJ

Abstrakt

Teologia stosowana jest nauką refleksją o codziennym „wzrastaniu” człowieka, który żyje na co dzień w świecie i tam spełnia siebie, i realizuje swoje powołanie egzystencjalne, a chrześcijanie budują Królestwo Boże. Z perspektywy teologii stosowanej można wyróżnić trzy główne zasady łączące kościelność i społecznienie: poszanowanie dla prawdy, sprawiedliwość społeczną i miłość. W teologii stosowanej można podjąć refleksję naukową na temat kościelności, bez naruszania prawa teologii pastoralnej do badania Kościoła i jego misji zbawczej. W poszukiwaniu wiedzy na temat wymiaru społecznego życia człowieka należy jednak unikać autorytarnego i abstrakcyjnego uniwersalizmu.

Słowa kluczowe: teologia pastoralna, teologia stosowana, kościelność, społecznienie

INTRODUCTION

Pastoral theology occupies a very important place in the history of the Church, and it has been the subject of many scholarly treatises. Due to historical conditions of salvific activity, pastoral theologians primarily concentrated their attention on priests, who, through their ordination, act “in the person of Christ” being educators of God’s people in the faith, preachers, as well as ministers of the Eucharist and the other sacraments (Paul VI 1975, 68). It was with the development of pastoral ecclesiology and the slow process of opening up to external changes (socio-cultural conditions), that the role of the laity became increasingly appreciated in Church activities. This was explicitly expressed by the Council Fathers, who stated that priests “were not ordained by Christ to take upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the Church toward the world. On the contrary they understand that it is their noble duty to shepherd the faithful and to recognize their ministries and charisms, so that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one mind” (Second Vatican Council 1964, 30).

1. PASTORAL THEOLOGY AND APPLIED THEOLOGY

Pastoral theology occupies a prominent place in theological sciences, and this is due to historical reasons (as it is a science about the Church’s implementation of the salvific mission, i.e., pastoral care), as well as to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which includes orientation of theology to pastoral practice, or to the development of post-conciliar theology in the spirit of pastoral care for the Church (Kamiński 1983, 33-64).

Modern pastoral theology comprises in its field of study issues related to pastoral didactics, cultic activity, charitable ministry, apostolate, and evangelization,¹ as well as extensive tasks of educational, cultural, and social character (Przybyłowski 2008, 87-91). Pastoral theology in the narrow sense is situated alongside homiletics, catechetics, liturgy, which have their own material subject matter, formal subject matter and methodology (Kamiński 2005a, 214-223; Kamiński 2005b, 9-20).

¹ The essential evangelizing tasks of the Church were defined by Paul VI: “The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs” (Paul VI 1975, 18). “Evangelization, as we have said, is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative. These elements may appear to be contradictory, indeed mutually exclusive. In fact they are complementary and mutually enriching. Each one must always be seen in relationship with the others. The value of the last Synod was to have constantly invited us to relate these elements rather than to place them in opposition one to the other, in order to reach a full understanding of the Church’s evangelizing activity” (Paul VI 1975, 24).

In the classical approach, pastoral theology is concerned with the fulfilment of the salvific mission, and, therefore, the Church occupies the central position in its studies. However, throughout its history, pastoral theology developed concepts that, while focusing on the ministry of priests, took clerical forms. A radical change occurred at the Second Vatican Council, especially due to the pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world. All the Council's teaching was pastorally (ministerially) oriented, but it was in this Constitution that the Council Fathers pointed to the richness of the whole Church in its subjective dimension.

Undeniably, it was this conciliar teaching that provided an inspiration for John Paul II, who in his apostolic exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* formulated a new definition of pastoral, or practical, theology as a scientific reflection on the daily growth of the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the context of history. Pastoral theology here has the status of a full-fledged theological discipline because it draws the principles and criteria of the Church's pastoral activity in history from the faith. "Among these principles and criteria, one that is especially important is that of the evangelical discernment of the socio – cultural and ecclesial situation in which the particular pastoral action has to be carried out" (John Paul II 1992, 57).

Pastoral theology has always relied on up-to-date ecclesiology, so it is understandable that it is open to all systematic theology, but at the same time, in the main lines of its research, it takes into account the "signs of the times" (kairology). Consequently, it draws on the findings of research conducted within other pastoral specialties (liturgy, homiletics, catechetics), and cooperates with secular sciences (Kamiński 2006, 143-163). Pastoral theology has a practical dimension, which involves developing a theory that can be applied in practice.

Thus, pastoral theology is a science dealing with the Church and pastoral care which can only be conducted taking into account the historical context. Pastoral theology which focused on ecclesiology (orthodoxy) (Przybyłowski 2007, 156-169) and on the life and activity of the ecclesial community (orthopractice) (Przybyłowski 2005a, 245-266), did not, however, deal with individual or community experience of faith or with individual or social daily life of Church members in the world, and it is here that a space emerges for a new discipline, i.e., applied theology.

John Paul II was the unquestioned inspirator of applied theology. In his encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, the Pope emphasized the role of man as the route of the Church which lays the foundation for all those ways that the Church must follow, as every man without exception was redeemed by Christ, and with every man without exception Christ is united in some way, even if man does not realize it (John Paul II 1978, 14).

However, the Pope did not indicate a theological discipline that would address the question of man as "the way of the Church" with reference to man who lives in the world and on a daily basis carries out his existential and Christian vocation. Therefore, invoking the *Pastores dabo vobis* exhortation, it seems necessary to study, besides pastoral theology, i.e., practical theology, which is a scientific

reflection on the daily growth of the Church (John Paul II 1992, 57), a specifically defined theological discipline, i.e., applied theology, which will provide a scientific reflection on the daily “growth” of man,² who leads his daily life in the world and there fulfils himself and realizes his existential vocation, while Christians build the Kingdom of God.

2. THE CHURCH AND THE HUMAN COMMUNITY

The Church is immutable in its essence and as such she was founded by Jesus;³ At the same time, she constitutes a pilgrim community being “on the way” to the final goal. This thought is very synthetically formulated in catechetical teaching: the Church’s final goal is to enter the Kingdom through the final Passover, in which she will follow her Lord in His Death and Resurrection. Thus, the Kingdom will be fulfilled not by the Church’s historical triumph in accordance with its gradual development, but by God’s victory over the final unleashing of evil, which will cause His Bride to descend from heaven. God’s triumph over the rebellion of evil will take the form of the Final Judgment after the final cosmic upheaval of this world, which is passing away (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1992, 677).

Since the world in which the Church lives and carries out her mission is constantly changing, the formula for her action in the dimension of both salvific functions,⁴ as well as complementary (extensive) activities, is variable.⁵ The Church is, first and foremostly, a prasadament,⁶ which fact captures her original and unchanging essence. Jesus, who enables every person to belong to the Church through baptism, at the same time invites everyone to participate in her life and salvific activity, but at the same time grants man his freedom to pursue his existential vocation.

² Przybyłowski first approached the issues of pastoral theological reflection on the human person in *Koncepcja antropologiczna teologii pastoralnej* (Przybyłowski 2005b, 234-251).

³ “The Church does not cease to listen to his words. She rereads them continually. With the greatest devotion she reconstructs every detail of his life. These words are listened to also by non-Christians. (...) ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,’ speaks to people also as Man: it is His life that speaks, His humanity, His fidelity to the truth, His all-embracing love. Furthermore, His death on the Cross speaks—that is to say the inscrutable depth of His suffering and abandonment. The Church never ceases to relive His death on the Cross and His Resurrection, which constitute the content of the Church’s daily life. (...) The Church stays within the sphere of the mystery of the Redemption, which has become the fundamental principle of her life and mission” (John Paul II 1979, 7).

⁴ The salvific mission constitutes the realization of the threefold mission and ministry of Christ: prophetic, priestly and royal (Second Vatican Council 1964, 31-36).

⁵ “the Church’s consciousness must go with universal openness, in order that all may be able to find in her «the unsearchable riches of Christ» (Eph 3:8) spoken of by the Apostle of the Gentiles. Such openness, organically joined with the awareness of her own nature and certainty of her own truth, of which Christ said: «The word which you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me», is what gives the Church her apostolic, or in other words her missionary, dynamism” (John Paul II 1979, 4).

⁶ “The Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (Second Vatican Council 1964, 1).

Christians, as members of the Church, are not deprived of their membership and participation in the life of the human community. Being a member of the Church and being a member of the human community are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary: participation in the community of the Church and membership in the human community can complement and mutually enrich each other.⁷ This means that the privilege of being in the Church should influence a person's partaking in the human community. Conversely, being a member of the human community should be reflected in belonging to the ecclesial community.

3. ECCLESIALITY AND SOCIALIZATION IN PRACTICE

The Church in its divine essence is immutable, because her "essence" is the Person of Jesus. Therefore, the primary task of the Church is to direct human gaze, as well as the consciousness and experience of all mankind, towards the mystery of Christ, to "help all men to be familiar with the profundity of the Redemption taking place in Christ Jesus. At the same time man's deepest sphere is involved – we mean the sphere of human hearts, consciences, and events" (John Paul 1979, 10).

On the other hand, from the human perspective, the Church is a community of Christians who bring into her body their own personal and existential wealth. Jesus makes Himself represented in community with the baptized members of the Church, thus enabling the Church to realize her salvific mission. Representation of Jesus and realization of the salvific mission constitute the Church's immutable essence. On the other hand, the way in which her members make themselves represented and function in the ecclesial community undergoes constant transformation.⁸ This, however, is done in full respect for the nature of Christ's salvation, about which St. Ambrose writes as follows: "Behold, I make all things new; and this surpasses even fraternal attachment and love. A brother, born of the

⁷ The Church encourages the lay faithful to participate personally in public life and to engage in various types of political, economic, social, and legislative activities that organically serve the growth of the common good (John Paul II 1988, 42-43). The lay faithful should take an active part in the proper formation of social life, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens in accordance with their competence and responsibility (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 2002, 6).

⁸ "As we all know, the Church is deeply rooted in the world. It exists in the world and draws its members from the world. It derives from it a wealth of human culture. It shares its vicissitudes and promotes its prosperity. But we also know that the modern world is in the grip of change and upheaval. It is undergoing developments which are having a profound influence on its outward way of life and habits of thought. The great advances made in science, technology, and social life, and the various currents of philosophical and political thought pervading modern society, are greatly influencing men's opinions and their spiritual and cultural pursuits. The Church itself is being engulfed and shaken by this tidal wave of change, for however much men may be committed to the Church, they are deeply affected by the climate of the world. They run the risk of becoming confused, bewildered and alarmed, and this is a state of affairs which strikes at the very roots of the Church. It drives many people to adopt the most outlandish views. They imagine that the Church should abdicate its proper role and adopt an entirely new and unprecedented mode of existence" (Paul VI 1964, 26).

same mother, cannot save, because he is affected by the same weakness. A man will redeem, but the One about whom it is written: «The Lord will send them a man who will deliver them», the One who said of Himself, «You are trying to kill Me, the man who told you the truth»” (Ambroży 1988, 106-107).

The Church being in her essence the “Mystical Body of Christ” (Pius XII 1943, 193-248), indicates that all her members are one in Jesus Christ, as St. Augustine explicitly put it: “Let us rejoice and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ. Do you understand, brothers, the grace of Christ our Head? Wonder at it, rejoice: we have become Christ. For if He is the Head, we are the members; He and we form the whole man... the fullness of Christ, therefore; the head and the members. What is the head and the members? Christ and the Church” (Paul VI 1964, 35).

Starting from the very membership in the Church by virtue of baptism, through personal union with Jesus and participation in the realization of the salvific mission to the realization of one’s own Christian and existential vocation, each member of the community manifests his ecclesiality. What, therefore, is it?

4. ECCLESIALITY

Ecclesiality, on the one hand, legitimizes and entitles each member of the Church to enjoy the fruits of Christ’s saving mission, but on the other hand, defines his participation in the life and activities of the Church (Przybyłowski 2016, 93-104). This participation in the community can have both positive and destructive influence on its state, functioning and activities. Ecclesiality, therefore, implies variability within the lives and activities of the members of the ecclesial community, which can, and in some cases even should, be changed (*aggiornamento*). This follows from the fact that the Church, which constitutes a human community and operates according to the rules of social life, can also be studied and defined in the very categories used by sciences dealing with any other forms of human society (John Paul II 1979, 21).

Ecclesiality is thus ontically linked to the ecclesial community, but at the same time it implies the opening of Christians to society. It should be emphasized, however, that apart from “social affiliation”, what is important both for the community of God’s people as a whole as well as for all its individual members, is a special “vocation” (John Paul II 1979, 21). Therefore, the life and activity of the Church (structures, institutions), that is, its missionary dynamism (*ad extra*), while taking into account human history and the various burdens of its history, requires respect for the supernatural essence of the Church (*ad intra*).

The interrelatedness of these two dimensions of the Church’s life and activity in a way compels its members to adopt a “missionary” attitude. It is because the Spirit, who “breathes: where He wills” (cf. Jn 3:8), works in every man, and thus every man deserves respect for what is “in each person” (Jn 2:25), for what that man has already worked out in the depths of his soul in both spiritual and natural sphere. The activities of the modern Church should, therefore, be missionary

in nature, not to overturn anything, but at the same time seek opportunities for cooperation in building the Kingdom of God in the world.⁹

Ecclesiality has yet another dimension – it concerns the relationship of the Church to the human community. The Church and the human community should remain autonomous in their essence, functioning and activities.¹⁰ Church members, on the other hand, have the right to realize their ecclesiality not only in the ecclesial community, but also beyond it, in the human community. This is the basic right of the human person – the right to religious freedom, i.e., the right to be a religious person, and to publicly manifest one's ecclesiality.¹¹

5. SOCIALIZATION

The human community, unlike the Church, does not have an immutable essence. Members of the human community form an organism that can function properly providing its members respect the basic laws of structure, organization, and social activity, that they respect the equal dignity, and the same personal rights of all members. Thus, socialization should consist in establishing the structure and rules of the community, which can even undergo major changes. At the same time, the fundamental element of socialization should be respect for the dignity and rights of the human person – this cannot be subject to any human authority.¹²

What is the point of convergence between ecclesiality and socialization? Ecclesiality, which is characterized by intra-ecclesial variability (it can be reformed, changed, renewed), can also function properly in the human community, provided that the dignity and rights of each human person be respected. On the other hand, socialization, whose essence consists in respect for the dignity and rights of the human person (an inviolable element) in the life and action of the community, can help Church members to seek ways to improve (“bring up to date”) ecclesiality, that is, those elements of the Church that can be changed. The Church is constantly looking for new ways to discover the richness of her essence, her mission, her

⁹ “The Second Vatican Council did immense work to form that full and universal awareness by the Church of which Pope Paul VI wrote in his first Encyclical. This awareness-or rather self-awareness-by the Church is formed in a ‘dialogue’; and before this dialogue becomes a conversation, attention must be directed to ‘the other’, that is to say: the person with whom we wish to speak” (John Paul II 1979, 21).

¹⁰ The Church, which by virtue of her salvific mission and its issuing competences, enjoys full autonomy, by no means she identifies herself with the political community and is not associated with any political system (Second Vatican Council 1965, 76).

¹¹ The Church as a Christian community that lives on the basis of faith as a human community in the world. In a democratic system, such a community enjoys its own independence which the state should respect. The Church and the State, as two distinct and autonomous spheres of social life, should, however, always remain in a mutual relationship (Benedict XVI 2005, 28a).

¹² John XXIII taught that if “socialization” proceeded in accordance with moral principles, its extension would not of itself lead to grave discrimination of individual citizens, nor would it burden them excessively. Socialization can have a positive impact not only on the development and improvement of human values, but also on strengthening the bonds of harmonious coexistence of human society (John XXIII 1961, 67).

mysterious nature, her teachings, and to carry out her mission; at the same time, the Church continues to search new ways to support her members in active participation in community life (Paul 1964, 22).

Ecclesiality and socialization thus allow to maintain the autonomy of the Church and of the human community, while at the same time mobilizing Church and community members to take an active part in the life of both the ecclesial and the human community. Activities within the frames of ecclesiality are coherent with social activities, but they can also be realized independently, provided that the freedom of activities within ecclesiality and the freedom to create the structure and rules of the community with respect for God's law are secured. John Paul II, in his post-synodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*, warned, however, that today "In many social settings it is easier to be identified as an agnostic than a believer. The impression is given that unbelief is self-explanatory, whereas belief needs a sort of social legitimization which is neither obvious nor taken for granted" (John Paul II 2003, 7).

6. BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ECCLESIALITY AND SOCIALIZATION

From the perspective of applied theology, there are three main principles that link ecclesiality and socialization, namely, respect for truth, social justice, and charity.¹³ The modern Church in its Magisterium has repeatedly described human condition in the world as being far removed from the objective requirements of the moral order, from the requirements of justice, let alone social love,¹⁴ or respect for the truth.

In their search for and discovery of the truth, Christians should always act in accordance with their own conscience and avoid such compromises which could negatively affect either religion or moral integrity. At the same time, however, they should adopt an attitude of objective benevolence towards the views of others, avoid trying to turn everything to their own advantage, as well as show a willingness to cooperate loyally in the pursuit of what is either intrinsically good or what leads to good by joint efforts (John XXIII 1961, 239).¹⁵

All members of the Church community partake in the Church's responsibility for God's truth; this includes theologians, but also specialists in various fields,

¹³ John XXIII devoted the entire fourth chapter of the Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* to the renewal of social relations in truth, justice, and love.

¹⁴ "If we make bold to describe man's situation in the modern world as far removed from the objective demands of the moral order, from the exigencies of justice, and still more from social love, we do so because this is confirmed by the well-known facts and comparisons that have already on various occasions found an echo in the pages of statements by the Popes, the Council and the Synod¹⁰³. Man's situation today is certainly not uniform but marked with numerous differences. These differences have causes in history, but they also have strong ethical effects" (John Paul II 1979, 16).

¹⁵ St. Gregory the Great referring to the subject of teaching the truth, writes: "the knowledge of the presumptuous is characterized by the fact that when they teach, they cannot do it with humility and are unable to convey the truth very well known to them in a credible way. From their speech itself, it is clear that, through their teaching, they consider themselves very high, while they view their disciples as far below, almost in an abyss" (Grzegorz Wielki 1987, 245).

representatives of the natural sciences, humanities, doctors, lawyers, people of art and technology, teachers of various degrees and specialties. By virtue of their participation in the universal (“baptismal”) priesthood, all members of God’s people share in the prophetic mission of Christ by being guided by a reliable reference to the truth in every field, by educating others in the truth and teaching them to mature in love and justice. A sense of responsibility for the truth is one of the fundamental points of the Church’s encounter with every human being, as well as one of the basic requirements that define a person’s vocation in the community of the Church (John Paul II 1979, 19),¹⁶ as well as in social life.

The second important area linking ecclesiality and socialization is social justice. The Church can engage in any activity aimed at justice through reasoned argumentation and the reawakening of spiritual energy. However, a just community cannot be the work of the Church, but it should be realized through politics. Nevertheless, the Church is deeply interested in building social justice by opening people’s minds and will to the demands of the good (Benedict XVI 2005, 28a).

As can be deduced from the history of human society, justice alone does not always suffice, and it can even lead to its own negation if human life in its various dimensions is not shaped by the deeper power of love. After all, it was the historical experience that, among other things, made it possible to formulate the saying: *summum ius, summa iniuria*. This statement does not depreciate justice, neither does it diminish the importance of the order built on it, it only indicates, in another aspect, the need to reach out to the even deeper powers of the spirit that condition the order of justice (John Paul II 1980, 12).

Justice becomes an indispensable factor shaping mutual relationships among people in the spirit of mutual brotherhood and of the deepest respect for all that is human. It is impossible to establish such a bond between people if these relationships are measured by justice alone. In every sphere of interpersonal relations, justice must undergo a kind of thorough “correction” by faith and love (John Paul II 1980, 14).

Thus, from the perspective of applied theology, love is the most important principle of ecclesiality and socialization. Of course, human understanding of love, forms of its realization as well as the experience of love can be both universal in nature and bear the features of far-reaching individualization, because the love of God can turn into rejection of the gift of faith in God’s love, the love of the neighbour can transform into hatred, and self-love into egoism. Positive and

¹⁶ “We would like to pay special tribute to those brilliant scholars whose extremely competent works of theological research and exposition, undertaken in exemplary submission to the Church’s teaching authority, have made such an expert and useful contribution to this subject, especially within recent years. They have carried on this work not only in the theological schools, but also in discussions with academicians and intellectuals, in popular writings in defense of the Christian truth, in the spiritual direction of the faithful, and in conversations with our separated brethren. In all this they have presented many and various illustrations of the doctrine on the Church, many of which are quite outstanding and exceptionally useful” (Paul VI 1964, 31).

negative faces of love can appear both in ecclesiality and in socialization: faith – atheism, sacrifice – rejection, generosity – heartlessness, humility – pride.

According to Benedict XVI, the spiritual depth of human life is marked by love, which is “the criterion for the definitive decision about a human life’s worth or lack thereof” (Benedict XVI 2005, 15). Pope Francis, on the other hand, points out that although there are believers who are convinced that their greatness lies in imposing their ideologies on others, in defending the truth with violence, or in powerful displays of force, true social love ultimately makes all people strive for universal communion. No one matures or reaches his fullness in isolation from others, because love has its own dynamics and therefore requires an ever-increasing openness and ability to accept other people. Man is created in such a way that he cannot find his fulfilment, cannot develop, or reach his fullness except “through the sincere gift of himself” (Second Vatican Council 1965, 24). Neither can he achieve an in-depth knowledge of the truth about himself beyond encounters with others: “I commune with myself only insofar as I commune with someone else” (Marcel 1965, 49). This explains why no one can experience the value of life having no concrete faces to love. The Pope concludes that this is the secret of true human existence, because “Life exists where there is bonding, communion, fraternity; and life is stronger than death when it is built on true relationships and bonds of fidelity. On the contrary, there is no life when we claim to be self-sufficient and live as islands: in these attitudes, death prevails” (Franciszek 2019, 32; Francis 2020, 87).

7. COEXISTENCE OF ECCLESIALITY AND SOCIALIZATION

Applied theology allows to undertake scientific reflection on ecclesiality without violating pastoral theology’s right to study the Church and its salvific mission. Ecclesiality, however, touches on the very sensitive and at the same time thorny issue of the relationship between priests and the laity. Scientific research on this topic can begin by “defining” the main problems from the perspective of applied theology. The words of the prophet Jeremiah can serve as the point of departure here: “The priests did not say, ‘Where is the Lord?’ Those who handle the law did not know me; the shepherds transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit” (Jer. 2:8).¹⁷

This passage from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah foreshadows the changes that occurred in the Chosen People,¹⁸ and which in the same way can also occur in

¹⁷ What is meant here are the syncretic tendencies of false prophets who place more hope in foreign gods than in the Lord.

¹⁸ “Thus says the Lord: What wrong did your fathers find in me, that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless? They did not say, «Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, where no man dwells?» And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination (Jr 2:5-7).

the ecclesial community. It can be assumed, taking into account the whole context of the passage, that the essence of the ecclesial community's existence consists in seeking the Lord: "Where is the Lord?" This task rests first of all with priests, who are called and chosen by God to set the azimuth for the ecclesial community on their way to the Lord. Priests, as well as the whole community, possess the gift of faith, and use the rational knowledge of God, but they should at the same time remain in constant readiness to encounter God in experience.

On the other hand, rational knowledge about God should be gained by the scribes, whose task is to study the message of God's revelation and the Magisterium. The basic condition in such studies is the recognition of faith as the privileged way towards knowing God. However, scribes, by succumbing to the greatness of rational discoveries, may be tempted to substitute "faith" for "knowledge."

Pastors (not only priests, but also people holding various offices and fulfilling various missions and functions) are also called to serve the community, but they are the ones who are vulnerable to pursuing particularistic interests, or even taking actions aimed at personal gain or synecuries of members of various "groups", rather than serving the community as a whole: however, rebellion against God is tantamount to rejecting God's law as the foundation for the functioning of the community.

Finally, prophets, who are supposed to be the guardians of communicating God's truth and sustaining in the members of the community trust in God even in times of difficulty, or in various kinds of adversity. Along with true prophets, there often appear also false prophets, who offer members of the human community concepts of self-salvation and promote substitute ways of living out the true faith in God, and respect for God's law.

If the Church is recognized as the "Mystical Body of Jesus", there is no possibility of building an alternative to it: for there cannot be two "Mystical Bodies" of Jesus. However, there appears here the concept of ecclesiality which is based on the recognition of the truth that God is both the source and the foundation, and that from Him flows the power for man and his life, as well as for the functioning of every kind of community. However, ecclesiality is prone to the effects of original sin, as well as to the drive to absolutize human freedom. This poses serious threats on the plane of the experience of faith on the part of Church members, having moreover a destructive effect on their socialization. This is very clearly revealed in the religiosity of many Church members, who belittle the gift of sacramental salvation and the importance of the Eucharist in the work of mankind's redemption, while at the same time resorting to various forms of falsely understood ecclesiality, in which they see the source of spirituality for themselves.¹⁹

¹⁹ "One detail about the passers-by does stand out: they were religious, devoted to the worship of God: a priest and a Levite. This detail should not be overlooked. It shows that belief in God and the worship of God are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God. A believer may be untrue to everything that his faith demands of him, and yet think he is close to God and better than others. The guarantee of an authentic openness to God, on the other hand,

When does this happen? It is when people fail to recognize God as the source and foundation of their person and life as well as of the functioning of the community, and instead say that they invite God into their person, their life, and their community. It is therefore necessary here to return to the question posed earlier: "Where is the Lord?". Is He in the person of man, is His true presence in life recognized, and is He truly present in the community? There is only one answer: Christ is truly present in man, in life and in the community, while to invite God to man, life, or community *de facto* means to reject God, to distil Him from all personal and community reality, and to isolate man from God.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The processes society's secularization are combined with the deepening internal crisis of the Church as well as with the difficulties related with the socio-cultural situation outside the Church. Thus, in conclusion of the conducted scientific reflection, a question can be posed: what can be considered a bigger impediment to the unfettered development and progress of the modern man, who wants to free himself from the burden of God's law – the Church or ecclesiality? The answer is unequivocal: the Church, which no man and nothing that comes from man can change, for even the powers of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

The most prone to distortion is ecclesiality in which, in addition to purely religious needs, there appears the need to ascribe sense to human life, since an absurd or meaningless existence is difficult to bear for a psycho-cognitively constituted human being (Mandl-Schmidt 2003, 36). Ecclesiality, therefore, in its essence and shape is subjected to various influences, including those that are very dangerous to both man's faith and his individual and social existence in everyday life.

In the perspective of applied theology, the truth about the mystery of the Church reaches beyond the revealed knowledge and the Magisterium. Therefore, applied ecclesiology should embrace the very practice of life, so that the faithful, even before they form a clear idea of this truth, can get to know it, as it were, experientially, in a way that suits their nature. The community of the faithful, in turn, will certainly recognize that they belong to the Mystical Body of Christ when its members realize the fact that the ministry of the Church's hierarchy, by God's command, includes the duty of bringing new Christians into the community, begetting them, teaching them, sanctifying them, and leading them (Paul VI 1974, 37).

Pastoral theology will continue to conduct scientific studies on the life and work of the Church, but a major scientific effort must be made to seek the knowledge about the Church focused on the daily lives of its members. This calls

is a way of practicing the faith that helps open our hearts to our brothers and sisters. Saint John Chrysostom expressed this pointedly when he challenged his Christian hearers: «Do you wish to honour the body of the Saviour? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honour it in church with silk vestments while outside it is naked and numb with cold.» Paradoxically, those who claim to be unbelievers can sometimes put God's will into practice better than believers" (Francis 2020, 74).

for the study of a new discipline of applied theology focused on man, who is the way of the Church.

Man lives his daily life in the world whose “future is not monochrome; if we are courageous, we can contemplate it in all the variety and diversity of what each individual person has to offer. How much our human family needs to learn to live together in harmony and peace, without all of us having to be the same!” (Francis 2020, 100). At the same time, Pope Francis stresses that in the search for knowledge about the dimensions of human social life, it is necessary to avoid authoritarian and abstract universalism, forced or planned by some and presented as a supposed ideal, aimed at unification, domination, and plunder. There is a model of globalization “which consciously aims at a one-dimensional uniformity and seeks to eliminate all differences and traditions in a superficial quest for unity. (...) If a certain kind of globalization claims to make everyone uniform, to level everyone out, that globalization destroys the rich gifts and uniqueness of each person and each people” (Franciszek 2015, 46). However, this false universalist dream can lead to depriving the world of the diversity of its colours, its beauty, and ultimately its humanity (Francis 2020, 100).

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