

JAN JÓZEF JANICKI

THE RITE OF EXCOMMUNICATION AS CONTAINED IN THE MEDIÉVAL ROMAN PONTIFICAL

"Expel the wicked man from your midst"
(1 Cor. 5, 13)

The pontifical¹ is a liturgical book used by the bishop. It contains prayer formulas and the rites proper to the liturgical confection of sacraments and sacramentals reserved solely to the bishop². The pontifical arose from a practical necessity - the use of only one book during holy functions. It was formed from three different ancient books of the Church: the sacramental (*Liber sacramentorum*), a collection of euchological formulas (formularly prayer); books describing celebrations and rules pertaining to pontifical liturgical functions (*Ordines Romani*); and the collections of blessings (*Benedictionale*), used by the bishops in the Gallic liturgy³. A new type of book, which became the first pontifical combining the Roman and Gallic traditions, appeared in the tenth century (in the years 950–961/3) in Mainz, in the monastery of Saint Alban and was called the *Roman – Germanic Pontifical* (*Pontificale Romano-Germanicum*)⁴. In a short time this pontifical became very popular, with many copies made, many of them surviving to this day. Copies of the pontifical, coming primarily from the Mainz ecclesiastical province, reached various parts of Germany, France, England and Italy⁵.

¹ From the Latin *pontificale*, and this noun is taken from the word *pontifex* - priest, bishop (presently this title is applied only to the pope, as: *Summus Pontifex Romanus*).

² Cf. M. Righetti, *History of Liturgy. I: General Introduction*, Milan 1964, page 345 etc.

³ Cf. A. Podleś, *The XII Century Pontifical of Plock*, „The Biblical and Liturgical Movement”, 34:1981, pg. 374 etc; J. W. Bogunowski, *The Historical Development of the Books of the Roman Liturgy Up to the Thirteenth Century and Their Reception in Poland*, Kraków 2001, pg. 159 etc.

⁴ Cf. A. Podleś, *The XII Century...*, p. 375; J. W. Bogunowski, *The Historical Development...*, p. 161.

⁵ Cf. J. W. Bogunowski, *The Historical Development...*, p. 162.

In Poland the oldest and only complete Polish pontifical, which "was the model of many rites conserved in Poland"⁶, is the *Pontifical of Płock*. After detailed paleographic analysis and the study of the contents of the codex historians have concluded that it originated no later than the second half of the twelfth century, "with the possibility of moving even to the other quarter century"⁷. It is believed that the codex was transcribed from a PRG (*Pontificale Romano-Germanicum*) copy specifically for Poland⁸. Proof of this is the text of the oath taken by a newly consecrated bishop in the presence of the metropolitan bishop. But there is no absolute certainty as to where and for whom the pontifical was transcribed. On the basis of the codex's date of origin and contents, the common opinion in the literature on the subject has become the hypothesis that the codex is connected with Bishop Aleksander of Płock and his milieu. It was probably written for the bishop of Płock, in his own country of Moza or in northern France, and was intended for Poland.

Comparative analysis of the contents of the *Pontifical of Płock* with the twelfth century Roman Pontifical of Wilhelm Durand (thirteenth century bishop of Mend), found in the thirteenth century Roman curia, and also comparison with the tenth century *Roman-Germanic Pontifical*, shows that the Codex of Płock has most in common with the PRG⁹. Furthermore, the Pontifical of Płock is a replica of the pontifical originating in Mainz, which – copied in many variations according to the demands of the recipients – was propagated "rapidly and widely"¹⁰. An examination of the Płock Pontifical, representing the oldest type of pontifical, that is the *Roman-Germanic Pontifical* and at the same time the oldest complete Polish pontifical, permits us to recognize the earliest liturgical pontifical in Poland¹¹ which is modelled on the Roman Pontifical.

The Pontifical of Płock is a liturgical book which is not arranged entirely according to contents since, besides the rites performed by the bishop, it contains other rites which in today's rituals are performed by priests. Furthermore, there appear "rites pertaining to persons and things. Many various other rites, comprising a distinct whole, are contained but yet under one common title"¹².

The contents of the liturgical pontifical of Płock are very rich. It begins with the rite of episcopal consecration and a group of blessings of objects. The blessings end with the formulas for the blessing of episcopal insignia. After the *Order of*

⁶ Cf. J. Michalak, *Outline of Liturgy*, Płock 1939, pg. 217.

⁷ *The XII Century... A Source-Expert Liturgical Study. Text Edition*, ed. by A. Podleś, Płock 1986, p. 42.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ The Płock pontifical has 58 ritual elements in common with the Roman – Germanic pontifical (with three remaining ones, only from 8 to 10) plus 12 different ones and then 10 of its own, as, for example, the rite of *depositio crucis* and *visitatio sepulchrum*, which is the oldest account of the Resurrection found in Poland (see. *The XII Century...*, p. 32 and 42).

¹⁰ *The XII Century...*, p. 33.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

Confirmation (Ordo confirmationis) there follow the blessings of persons and blessings connected with the liturgical cycle, and also with the sacraments of matrimony and anointing of the sick. The pontifical ends with the rite of infant baptism, listed by the editor as rite eighty five (LXXXV)¹³.

Among many of the above-mentioned rites contained in the book we find the rite of excommunication, listed under number 43, entitled *Process of the rite of excommunication of incorrigibles (Incipit ordo ad excommunicandum incorrigibiles)*¹⁴. The analysis of this medieval text permits us to synthesize the theological presentation and the practical consequences of excommunication, the rite revealing the concept of the Church and of the person of the bishop and the person being excommunicated by him.

THE LOGOS AND ETHOS OF EXCOMMUNICATION

The law of order is inseparably linked to the social life of every human society. Institutional regulation is also necessary in the Church community. Because the Church is a theandryc (divine-human) structure in which the human element is subordinate to the divine, the visible is subservient to the invisible, and the temporal life tends to its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem¹⁵. The Second Vatican Council, mindful of the true nature of the Church, declared that the Church is both human and divine : both visible and equipped with invisible good, both zealous in action and given to contemplation, both present in the world and at the same time on pilgrimage. Nevertheless that which is human in the Church is conformed to that which is divine; that which is visible leads to an invisible reality; the active life leads to contemplation and that which is temporal is a road to the future life which we seek (*Constitution on the Liturgy*, no. 2).

Ecclesial society has its foundation in the union of the divine and human nature of the person of the Son God, Jesus Christ, who is the head of the new People of God. Thus the Church looks with faith at Jesus, the Author of salvation and the Beginning of unity, her Founder. Living in the temporal sphere, the Church seeks the future and lasting city and does not cease "renewing itself until through the cross it comes to the light which knows no setting" (*Constitution on the Church*, no. 9).

The Church is a hierarchically variegated community in which the numerous and varied functions performed by the individual member serve the good of the whole organism. In the teaching of Vatican II we are told that for the purpose of shepherding the People of God, and effecting the unending growth of the flock, the

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 27-29; J. W. Boguniowski, *The Historical Development...*, p. 175.

¹⁴ *Cf. The XII Century...*, p. 129-134.

¹⁵ *Cf. S. Czerwik, Introduction to the Constitution on the Holy Liturgy*, found in, *Vatican Council II. Constitutions. Decrees, Declarations. Polish Text. New Translation*, Poznań 2002, p. 38.

Lord Jesus has established various services in the Church, intended for the good of the whole body of the Church. With holy authority these services serve the faithful so that all who belong to the People of God now rejoice in true Christian dignity, and in a free and orderly manner tend to the same goal and thus attain salvation (*Constitution on the Church*, no. 18).

The existence of law in such an ecclesial community convinces us that Church law cannot be regarded as something alien in the Church organism, for it fulfils an important assignment in the Church's life, "strengthening and intensifying all common efforts concerning the Christian life"¹⁶.

Pope John Paul II states that the whole legal and legislative tradition of the Church stems from its primary source, from the heritage of the law contained in the books of the Old and New Testament¹⁷. The Lord Jesus did not destroy but fulfilled (Mt 5, 17) the rich heritage of the Law and the Prophets which, slowly developing from the experience of the People of God of the Old Testament, "belongs in a new and more perfect manner to the inheritance of the New Testament". Even though Saint Paul teaches that justification is obtained not from deeds of law but from faith (Rom 3, 28; Gal 2, 16) nevertheless he did not exclude the binding power of the Decalogue (Rom 13, 8-10; Gal 5, 13-25; 6, 2). Nor did he deny the role of discipline in the Church of God (I Cor. 5 and 6). And so, the words of the New Testament help us to better understand the importance of discipline, so that we may more deeply comprehend the ties which, at a higher level, bind discipline to the salutary character of the very Message of the Gospel¹⁸.

Church law serves the preservation of such order in the society of the Church, so that, recognizing the primary role of love, grace and charisma, the law may at the same time facilitate their growth in the private and community life of the faithful. Church law based on the legal and legislative heritage of Revelation and Tradition is an indispensable instrument "thanks to which proper order is preserved both in the individual and in society and likewise in the works of the Church"¹⁹. Besides the fundamental elements in the hierarchical and organizational structures of the Church, established by its Divine Founder, and besides the principal norms pertaining to the triple duties entrusted to the Church itself²⁰, the Church has the right to define certain rules and norms of behaviour.

The law of the Church foresees that in a situation when someone commits a particular offence, a specific externally and morally accountable violation of Church law, then an appropriate punitive sanction will be applied. This is a necessity to which the competent superior (above all the bishop) has recourse only then

¹⁶ Paul VI, *Allocution* (May 26, 1968), cited by: E. Sztafrowski, *Law of the Church*, found in *Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by A. Zuberbier, Katowice 1998, p. 454.

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Apostolic Constitution*, found in *Code of Canon Law*, Poznań 1984, p. 11.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

when no other recourse is effective, such as counsel, encouragement and good example. By an ecclesiastical penalty we mean the depriving someone of a certain good in order to correct the perpetrator and condemn his evil deed²¹.

Excommunication²² is regarded as the most severe Church penalty. It consists of depriving the Christian of the rights of the faithful and of participating with the faithful²³. It excludes one "from benefiting from and using the goods, graces and rights of the Church, but not from membership in the Church, which is obtained at baptism, that is, membership in the society of the Church"²⁴. Excommunication does not separate a person from the Church but simply prevents him from benefiting from the rights acquired at incorporation into the People of God²⁵. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that excommunication is "the most severe Church penalty, which prohibits one to receive the sacraments and to exercise certain ecclesiastical acts" (no. 1463).

Exclusion from society of someone, who in the light of its laws had caused it great harm, was already practised in Hebrew, Roman and German societies. The Church, however, did not introduce excommunication into its laws so much from other systems of law as from the customs of the Old Testament and the teaching of Jesus Christ and Saint Paul, which formulated the practice of excluding certain categories of public sinners from participating in the life of the Church community²⁶. In the early centuries of the Church such a penalty was applied only in cases of extreme violations, like simony, heresy, murder, and rebellion against the Church's authority. With the passage of time the penalty began to be also applied to lesser transgressions and even to offences which merely threatened to harm the temporal goods of the Church²⁷.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries excommunication assumed an exclusively correctional character and Church law began to differentiate between greater and lesser excommunication. The greater excommunication excluded a person totally from co-functioning with the faithful while the lesser, or minor, excommunication forbade the reception of the sacraments and fruits of ecclesiastical dignities. Up to the fifteenth century the faithful were forbidden to have any contact, both in spiritual and secular matters, with persons who had incurred even minor excommunication²⁸.

²¹ Cf. E. Szafrowski, *Church Penalties*, as found in *Dictionary of Theology...*, p. 231.

²² The word 'excommunicare' which means, to exclude, to separate from the community, to curse, to anathematize.

²³ Cf. J. Krukowski, F. Lempa, *Sanctions in the Church*, as found in *Commentary to the Code of Canon Law*, edited by .W. Wójcik, J. Krukowski, F. Lempa, vol. 4, Lublin 1987, p. 164.

²⁴ A. Jougan, *Latin-Polish Dictionary of the Church*, Warszawa 1992, p. 238.

²⁵ Cf. E. Szafrowski, *Canon Law During the Period of Councilor Renewal*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1979, p. 579 etc.

²⁶ Cf. J. Krukowski, F. Lempa, *Sanctions in the Church...*, p. 165.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ The penalty was abolished in 1889 by Pius IX in virtue of the constitution *Apostolicae Sedis* (*Apostolic See*).

The liturgical rite of imposing excommunication contained in the "Ploek Pontifical" presents the penalty as the last resort of loving Mother Church in her attempt to save her son, born in baptism and counted among the sons of God. This "son of our Church", prompted by the devil and scorning his baptismal promises - indeed in some way becoming the son of the devil - through apostasy had offended the Church of God in teaching and action. Thus sinning against brothers in the Faith, and thereby against the Holy Church, he was admonished and called to amendment, restitution and penance by the shepherd of the Church, the bishop, all in the spirit of the Gospel (Mt 18, 15). But if, selling his soul to the devil and persisting in evil, he ignored all salutary admonitions and refused to make amends to the Church of God, which he had hurt through his pride, he was then considered a "pagan" and "publican" (Mt 18, 17). Conforming to the advice of Saint Paul: *Auferte malum ex vobis ipsis* - "Expel the wicked man from your midst" (1 Cor. 5, 13) - the bishop separates the offender from the "body" of the Church through excommunication since he refuses to accept the healing "medicine", and does so in order to prevent the contamination of the other members of the Body of the Church²⁹.

Before announcing the excommunication, the bishop calls out three times at Mass for the perpetrator, the "rebel-apostle" (*rebellum*), to return to the community of Holy Mother Church. Then, if the "rebel" does not obey, the bishop informs those who are present of the efforts that were made to attempt his correction and reparation. And because he did not heed the words of Saint Paul, "because of your hard and unrepentant heart you are storing up anger for yourself on the day of wrath" (Rom 2, 5), the "rebel" was then excluded from the Church³⁰.

The declaration of excommunication excludes the apostate (*incurribilis*) from the rights of the community of the faithful, and imposes upon him the curse and judgement of damnation together with the devil and all the damned in the everlasting fire of hell. Nevertheless, the bishop leaves the apostate with the hope of returning to the flock of Christ and again benefiting from the rights and privileges of the faithful if only he converts and amends his ways. On the bishop's pronouncement of the "verdict" of excommunication the faithful there present exclaim three times, *Amen*, or *Fiat*, *Fiat* or even, *Anathema sit*³¹.

²⁹ „Membrum putridum et insanabile, quod medicinam non recipit ferro excommunicationis a corpore Ecclesiae abscidamus, ne tam pestifero morbo reliqua membra corporis veluti veneno inficiantur“ (*The XII Century...*, p. 131).

³⁰ „A liminibus sanctae matris Ecclesiae in coelo et in terra excludimus“ (*The XII Century...*, p. 131).

³¹ „Et excommunicatum et anathematizatum esse decernimus, et damnatum cum diabolo et angelis eius et omnibus reprobis in igne eterno iudicamus, nisi forte a diaboli laquero resipiscat et ad emendationem et poenitentiam redeat et Ecclesiae Dei, quam lesit, satisfaciat“ (*The XII Century...*, p. 131). The Roman pontifical foresaw the rite of the reconciliation of the excommunicated persons: *Ordo qualiter episcopus reconciliet excommunicatos* (Cf. *The XII Century...*, p. 134-136).

THE LITURGY OF EXCOMMUNICATION

The exclusion and condemnation (*excommunicare, anathematizare*) is performed by the bishop during Mass. Vested for Mass he goes in procession from the sacristy, with the clergy amid the awaiting congregation. The liturgy proceeds as usual until the end of the Gospel reading. The bishop then mounts the altar steps in the company of twelve priests holding burning candles, which, upon the conclusion of the excommunication rite, they throw to the floor and trample underfoot³². From the sanctuary the bishop calls upon the "apostate" to repent and return to the community of the Church. If the "apostate" refuses to do so then the bishop explains to the gathered people the nature of the Church penalty. The pontifical gives five such explanations (*allocutio*) of a similar nature, which precede the declaration of excommunication.

The pontifical encourages the bishop to inform the people in plain words of the horrendousness of excommunication, notifying them that from the moment of its pronouncement the "apostate" is to be regarded as a pagan, and that anyone who would maintain contact with him as if with a Christian, who would eat with him in common, who would receive him into his home, who would pray (!) together with him, who would exchange kisses with him, or converse with him in the family, except if striving to convince the "apostate" to repent and make satisfaction for his transgression, then such a person would incur the same penalty as the "apostate".

The pontifical reminded the excommunicating bishop of his duty to write a letter to every one of his parish priests to inform them of the excommunication. The priests were then to announce publicly, to the people in their cure, the obligation to avoid contact with the "apostate"³³. The *Ordo ad excommunicandum incorrigibiles* likewise advises that in conformity with the Synod of Toledo I (V century) all the bishops of the Church's provinces be informed of the excommunication³⁴.

THE CHURCH IN LIGHT OF THE RITE OF EXCOMMUNICATION

In the abovementioned liturgical texts there is mention of "the Church of God" (*Ecclesia Dei*)³⁵. In five out of six cases the expression is used in the context of satisfying the Church which has been hurt, offended, attacked or sinned against. In such a manner we understand the use of the verb "*laedere*":

³² Cf. *The XII Century...*, p. 129.

³³ „Ne quis per ignorantiam communicet cum excommunicato“: (Lest someone thru ignorance communicate with the excommunicated person) (*The XII Century...*, p. 134).

³⁴ „Oportet etiam, ut aliis episcopis ipsa excommunicatio manifestetur. Praecepit enim Toletanum concilium, ut invicem mox scripta percurrant per omnes provincias episcopos“ (*The XII Century...*, p. 134).

³⁵ Cf. *The XII Century...*, p. 130-132 (three times), 133.

[...] Ecclesiae Dei, quam lesit superbiae spiritu inflatus; Ecclesiae Dei, quam lesit, satisfaciat; Ecclesiae Dei quam lesit, humiliter satisfecerit; ecclesiarum Dei violatores; Ecclesiae Dei, quam leserunt, per emendationem et condignam poenitentiam satisfecerint³⁶.

If an "apostate" would not show true contrition and amend his ways then, on the basis of the excommunication, he could not enter the "House of God", that is, the temple and the community of the faithful, and especially he could not participate in the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ³⁷.

The expression "Church of God" (ἐκκλησία του θεου) was taken from writings of Saint Paul³⁸. The Apostle of the Nations used the term above all as an honourable title given to the first Christian community in Judea. Later he applied the term also in reference to the Church of Corinth, flattering this Church with which he had had a stormy relationship, now finally normalized. Paul gave to the Corinthian community the title which he had applied earlier to the mother Church in Palestine³⁹.

Paul's wider application of the term resulted in its application to the Church community beyond local boundaries. In the Middle Ages the term was applied to the universal Church, established throughout the whole world, whose parts embrace every diocesan and parish community as well as every liturgical congregation⁴⁰. Vatican II, in its teaching on the Church, reminds us that as Israel in its journey through the desert was already called the Church of God⁴¹ (Ne 13, 1; Lb 20, 4; Pwt 23, I n n), so also the New Israel, living in the present and seeking the future and lasting city (Heb. 13, 14), is also called the Church of Christ (Mt. 16,18) since Christ obtained it at the cost of His blood (Acts 20, 28), filled it with His spirit, and equipped it with adequate means of visible and invisible unity. God established the Church that it might be for each and all a visible sacrament of salutary unity⁴².

In the rite of excommunication the Church is called "Holy Mother" (*sancta Mater Ecclesia*)⁴³. It was Saint Paul who called the Church "our mother" (Gal 4, 26) and pointed to her maternal dimension. In his opening words the bishop refers to the Church as our mother and says that the "apostate" is a "son of our Church",

³⁶ Op. cit. p. 130–132.

³⁷ Op. cit. p. 133 etc..

³⁸ Cf. 1 Cor. 1, 2; 10, 32; 11, 16, 22; 15, 9; 2 Cor. 1, 1; Gal 1, 13; 1 Thes 2, 14; 2 Thes 1, 4; 1 Tim 3, 5, 15. Besides *Letters of St. Paul*, this expression appears only once in the Acts of the Apostles 20, 28; cf. R. Popowski, *The Great Greek-Polish Dictionary of the New Testament*, Warszawa 1997, p. 183.

³⁹ J. A. Fitzmyer, *Theology of Saint Paul*, as found in, *Catholic Biblical Commentary*, edited by R.E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, R. E. Murphy, Warszawa 2001, p. 2177.

⁴⁰ Cf. J. J. Janicki, *The Service of Sanctifying. The Liturgical Gathering-A Sign of the Church*, as found in, ed. R. Kamiński, *Pastoral Theology. Vol. 2: Detailed Pastoral Theology*, Lublin 2002, p. 243 etc..

⁴¹ „Israel secundum carnem [...] Die Ecclesia iam appellatur [...] ita novus Israel [...] etiam Ecclesia Christi nuncupatur” (document of the Vatican Council II *Lumen Gentium* number 9).

⁴² Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* number 9; the Council cites St. Cyprian in his work, *Epist.*, 69,6: „inseparabile unitatis sacramentum” (found in Migne's patrology of the Latin Church Fathers , 3, 1142 B).

⁴³ Cf. *The XII Century...*, p. 129, 131, 132 (twice).

born in the Church "through water and the Holy Spirit", and numbered among the chosen sons of God⁴⁴.

The medieval rite of excommunication also calls the Church a vineyard⁴⁵. Christ referred to himself as a vine and his disciples as the branches. The members of the Church are united to Christ when they remain in the community of the Church⁴⁶.

In the rite of excommunication the bishop says that the Church is also a sheepfold over which the Divine Shepherd⁴⁷ shows his concern through the bishops, so that the Sheep entrusted to them may not be lost⁴⁸.

Vatican II reminds us that the only gate of the sheepfold is Christ (John 10, 1–10), who gave His life for His sheep (John 10, 11–15) (Constitution on the Church no. 6).

In the medieval rite the bishop reminded everyone that the Church is holy⁴⁹, and that the Church should treat violators of the divine and apostolic commandments as Christ teaches in the Gospel: "If your brother sins against you go and admonish him" (Mt 18,15). If someone sins against his brother he sins against Holy Church, which is one body of which we are all members: when one member suffers all the members suffer. Therefore, as the Lord directs, first admonish the sinner privately, later in the presence of witnesses, and finally publicly in the presence of the whole community of the local Church⁵⁰.

Analyzing the position of the medieval Church regarding certain sinners, on the basis of the application of excommunication, we see that the holiness of the Church always stood out.

The dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium* of Vatican II speaks of the sanctification of man through the sacraments especially the sacrament of reconciliation (Constitution on the Church, no. II).

THE PERSON OF THE EXCOMMUNICATING BISHOP

The rite of excommunication portrays the bishop as a good shepherd concerned for the welfare of the Church⁵¹. He embraces all its members, especially sin-

⁴⁴ „Filius Ecclesiae nostrae..., in ea per aquam et Spiritum Sanctum renatus est, et inter adoptivos filios Dei annumeratus" (*The XII Century...*, p. 129).

⁴⁵ „Per apostasiam conversus post sathanam,... vineam Christi, id est ecclesiam, eiusdem vastare et depredari non pertimescit" (op. cit. p. 129).

⁴⁶ Cf. M.-F. Lacan, *Vineyard*, as found in *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. by Fr. Leon-Dufour, Poznań 1985, p. 1044.

⁴⁷ Cf. *The XII Century...*, p. 129.

⁴⁸ Op. cit., p. 129 n.

⁴⁹ Op. cit., p. 130.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ Op. cit., p. 129.

ners, with paternal affection (*paterno affectu*)⁵², knowing that he will have to give an account to the Good Shepherd for the souls entrusted to him⁵³. This manifests the love of Christ⁵⁴. It is understood, then, that the bishop must undertake all measures to heal the sinners before, as the last resort, he resorts to excommunication⁵⁵.

The paternal concern is greatly manifest in the opening rite of the excommunication⁵⁶, when the bishop calls upon the "apostate" three times to return to the fold of Holy Mother Church⁵⁷.

The bishop merely exercises the authority given by Christ to Peter, and the Apostles and their Episcopal successors, when He spoke of binding and loosing on earth and in heaven (Mt 18,18)⁵⁸. Even when he imposes the excommunication the bishop expresses readiness to receive the "apostate" back into the Church upon his conversion, and he prays for the sinner⁵⁹.

During the rite of excommunication the bishop explained his role, his judicial authority in the light of the teaching of Christ and the Apostles (Mt 18; 15, 17, 29 and 18, 8)⁶⁰. Saint Paul summarized the teaching, as it were, in his instruction to the Corinthians⁶¹ when he said: "I write to you not to associate with one who is called a brother⁶², if he is immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or evil-tongued, or a drunkard or greedy; with such a one you are not even to take food" (1 Cor 5, 11).

While meting out the Church penalty the bishop referred to the words of the apostle "whom Jesus loved". John had forbidden the greeting and entertainment of anyone not remaining faithful to the teaching of Christ: "If anyone comes to you

⁵² Op .cit., p. 130.

⁵³ „In tremendo iudicio ante principem pastorum Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum“ (op. cit., p. 129).

⁵⁴ *The XII Century...* p. 129. This is a very interesting fragment of the bishop's address in which he refers to the words of Christ, citing the words of the prophet Ezekiel (!) which call for the admonition of the wrongdoer so as not to be guilty of his preventable spiritual death: „iuxta quod ipse [Iesus Christus] terribiliter nobis comminatur, decens: Si non annuntiaveritis iniquo iniquitatem suam, sanguinem eius de manu vestra requiram“ (3, 18) – *The XII Century...* , p. 129.

⁵⁵ „Misimus ad eum presbiterum nostrum et litteras commonitorias semel et iterum atque tertio, invitantes eum canonicè ad emendationem et satisfactionem et paenitentiam, corripientes eum paterno affectu“ (*The XII Century...*, p. 130).

⁵⁶ „Si vero converti non vult“ (*The XII Century...*, p. 129).

⁵⁷ „Tunc vocet illum rebellum ter, ut revertatur in gremium sanctae matris Ecclesiae“ (*The XII Century...* p. 129).

⁵⁸ *The Bible of the Millenium* in its commentary on Mt 18, 18 explains that this is the extension of the authority granted to the „elders of the Church“ in connection with the promise of primacy given to Peter (cf. Mt. 16, 19; John 20, 23).

⁵⁹ Cf. *The XII Century...*, p. 13: „si autem ad paenitentiam et emendationem venerint et secundum modum culpe fructus dignos paenitentiae fecerint, omnia mala ista avertat Deus ab illis et nos parati sumus ad recipiendum et orandum pro illis“.

⁶⁰ *The Bible of the Millenium* explains that this is merely a figure of speech, called hyperbole, used to emphasize the necessity of avoiding the occasion of sin; cf. *The XII Century...*, p. 130.

⁶¹ 1 Cor 5, 13. This refers to the practice of the Old Testament; cf. Deut 13, 6; 17, 7; 19, 19; 22, 24; *The XII Century...*, p. 130.

⁶² Because of membership in the same Christian community (cf. explanation in the *Bible of the Millenium*).

and does not bring this doctrine [of Christ], do not receive him into the house, or say to him, Welcome. For he who says to him, Welcome, is a sharer in his evil works (2Jn 1, 10-11)". The excommunication, then, of one incurably sick is therefore the fulfilment of the commandments of the Lord and of the Apostles⁶³.

The person of the bishop is eloquently characterized by the words which he addresses to the faithful – as, for example: "your love, my brothers, my dearest, most beloved children" – and the words he addresses to the excommunicated person: "child of our Church." Other references to the bishop signified him as a judge who verifies the accusations and then by his "authority and power"⁶⁴, pronounces the fitting judgement: "canonica instituta et sacrorum patrum exempla sequentes [...] a sanctae matris Ecclesiae gremio segregamus ac perpetuae damnationis anathemate condemnamus"⁶⁵, „a luminibus sanctae matris Ecclesiae excludimus, et ab omni societate et communione christiana separamus"⁶⁶.

THE CHARACTER OF THE EXCOMMUNICATED PERSON

The formulary of the rite of excommunication, *Ordo ad excommunicandum incorrigibiles* describes the character of the "apostate". In the opening words he is called a "rebel" (*rebellus*), who was repeatedly called to return to the community of "Holy Mother Church"⁶⁷, but whose obstinate stance, lack of contrition, and rejection of conversion resulted in the initiation of the rite of excommunication, which could have been avoided.

In his words, spoken after the Gospel reading, the bishop spoke of the incorrigible "apostate" as "our parishioner" (*parochianus noster est*) and "son of our Church" into which "he was born through water and the Holy Spirit" and "was numbered among the adopted children of God". Unfortunately, at the instigation of Satan, he had scorned the Christian promise made at holy baptism and returned again to the devil whom he had renounced together with his works⁶⁸. Ignoring

⁶³ „Dominica itaque atque apostolica precepta adimplentes, ...ferro excommunicationis a corpore Ecclesiae abscedimus“ (*The XII Century...*, p. 130).

⁶⁴ „Auctoritatae et potestate nobis divinitus collata“ (op. cit., p. 131, 132).

⁶⁵ „*The XII Century...*“, p. 132.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Op. cit., p. 129.

⁶⁸ Op. cit., p. 129: „diabolo suadente, postponens christianam promissionem, quam in baptismo professus est, per apostasiam conversus post sathanam, cui abrenuntiavit et omnibus operibus eius“: We find reference here to the pre-Vatican II rite of baptism wherein the celebrant asks the candidate: "Do You renounce Satan? And all his works? And all his pomps? (*N., Abrenuntias satanae? Et omnibus operibus eius? Et omnibus pompis eius?*)" (cf. *The Collection of Rites Containing Excerpts from the Roman Ritual Adapted to the Churches in Poland*, Katowice 1963, p. 35). In the post-Vatican II baptismal ritual the celebrant poses the questions: Do you renounce sin that you may live in the freedom of the children of God? Do you renounce everything that leads to evil, that sin may not overcome you? Do you renounce Satan, who is the main author of sin? (cf. *The Rites of the Baptism of Children Adapted to the Customs of Polish Dioceses*, Katowice 1994, p. 69 etc...). It is worth noting that in the so-called model edition (*editio tipica*) of the baptismal ritual called

salutary admonitions, hardening his heart after the example of Satan⁶⁹, offending the Church of God through satanic pride, devastating the Lord's vineyard, the Church, and rejecting restitution and the resolve to amend his life, the "apostate" in some way had become a child of Satan⁷⁰. The bishop thus followed the example of our Divine Teacher who said that if someone rejects the Christian admonition of his brother and becomes, in effect, a pagan and a publican (Mt 18, 17), he is no longer regarded as a Christian but as a pagan⁷¹. The Apostle Paul, following the teaching of Christ, scolded the Corinthians who maintained contact with criminal and evil people saying, "and you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned so that he, who has done this deed, might be put away from your midst" (1 Cor. 5, 2). And then he added: "Indeed, though absent in body but present in spirit I have already, as if present, passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ on the one who has so acted. When you are gathered, with my spirit present, with the power of our Lord Jesus you are to deliver such a one over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 5, 3-8)⁷².

The Church, then, through the service of the bishop, acted rightly when it excluded from its community whoever apostatized from the Christian faith and offended the Church of God through his words and deeds, despising the love of the Church that rushed to his aid. Acting on the advice of the Apostle of the Nations, "Expel the wicked man from your midst" (1 Cor. 5, 13), the Church applied the penalty of excommunication in order not to allow one sheep to contaminate the whole flock, and not to allow a little leaven to sour the whole mass of dough, which is the community of the Church. For this purpose such a very destructive "disease" had to be eliminated from the "body of the Church"⁷³.

Ordo baptismi parvulorum (Polyglot Vatican Printer, 1973, p. 42 etc...) the two versions mentioned above are presented as options.

⁶⁹ According to the teaching of St. Paul the Apostle: „But according to your hardness and your unrepentant heart, you store up for yourself wrath on the day of wrath” (Rom 2, 5a); cf. *The XII Century...*, p. 130 etc.

⁷⁰ Cf. *The XII Century...*, p. 129 etc...: „quamvis modo fillus diaboli sit, imitando diabolium”.

⁷¹ Op. cit., p. 131: „id est, iam non est computandus inter christianos, sed inter paganos”.

⁷² This text of St. Paul was read by the bishop during his "accusatory" address undoubtedly as an example of ancient Christian excommunication (such is the commentary of the *Bible of the Millennium!*). The punishment, despite its severity, nevertheless has a healing effect.

⁷³ „Una enim vobis morbida, omnem gregem contaminat, et modicum fermentum totam massam corrumpit. Ex plerumque unum membrum putridum totum corpus inficit. Et ideo tam pernicioosa pestis a corpore Ecclesiae radicans evellatur” (*The XII Century...*, p. 131).