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The synthesis of the Gospel and life as a goal of evangelization

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Abstract

The synthesis of the Gospel and life as a goal of evangelization

The article presents selected examples of the synthesis of the Gospel and life, which is the goal of contemporary evangelization. In implementing the prophetic purpose, it was emphasized that the proclamation of the Word of God is to illuminate and transform human existence. In implementing the priestly function, the focus was on celebrating the Eucharist, revealing it as a source of human strength and energy, a school of sacramental perception of life and appreciation of matter, as well as a space for forming a new man. In the implementation of the priestly function, however, attention was paid to the presence of the Church in the world and the Christian lifestyle, which is closely related to the promotion of man and the quality of his life. The study emphasizes that the existential orientation of evangelization establishes the proper relationship of the Church with the world. It involves accepting the world, dialogue with it, and transforming it in the spirit of the Gospel.

Keywords: evangelization, preaching, celebration of the Eucharist, the testimony of Christian life, Church, man, world

Abstrakt

Synteza Ewangelii i życia jako cel ewangelizacji

W artykule przedstawiono wybrane przykłady syntezy Ewangelii i życia, która jest celem współczesnej ewangelizacji. W realizacji funkcji prorockiej podkreślono, że głoszenie słowa Bożego ma oświeślać i przemieniać ludzką egzystencję. W realizacji funkcji kapłańskiej skupiono się na celebracji Eucharystii, ukazując ją jako źródło ludzkich sił i energii, jako szkołę sakramentalnego postrzegania życia i dowartościowania materii oraz przestrzeń formacji nowego człowieka. W realizacji funkcji kapłańskiej zwrócono uwagę na obecność Kościoła w świecie i chrześcijański styl życia, który jest ściśle powiązany z promocją człowieka i jakości jego życia. W opracowaniu podkreśla się, że egzystencjalne ukierunkowanie ewangelizacji ustanawia właściwą relację Kościoła ze światem. Polega ona na przyjęciu świata, dialogu z nim i jego przemianę w duchu Ewangelii.

Słowa kluczowe: ewangelizacja, przepowiadanie, celebracja Eucharystii, świadectwo chrześcijańskiego życia, Kościół, człowiek, świat

When determining methods of evangelization, one should start with methodologically important questions: who is being evangelized, and for what purpose? Therefore, the answer to the question “Who is evangelized?” is very important. Talking about God without being aware of “whom you are talking to” is—as Fabrice Hadjadj says—evangelization that is arrogant, pompous, and reminiscent of the work of a road roller. It can easily become the work of a fanatic who will hit others with the word “God” like a headshot, ignoring the difficult questions, doubts, and dilemmas¹. So, who are the recipients of evangelization? Years ago, John Paul II gave a descriptive definition of them, pointing out that these are those who “have lost the living sense of faith [...] leading a life far from Christ and His Gospel”². A life far from the Gospel is a manifestation of secularism that denies the existence of God and the religious nature of man, promotes a completely detached humanism from God, exaggerates man’s cognitive abilities, and consequently radically separates religiosity from human life in all its dimensions³. In such a perspective, God seems unnecessary to save people from ignorance and helplessness, to lead them to “abundant life” (cf. Jn 10:10), to transcend themselves, and to strive for development.

Evangelization in the secular world is an activity that stimulates and enables believers to develop a Christian identity so that it floods their entire lives with a living sense of faith. As John Paul II emphasized, contemporary evangelization is to achieve a “new, creative synthesis between the Gospel and life”⁴. In other words, modern evangelization is about connecting what secularism separates. In the following article, we will understand evangelization broadly and fully, as all activities leading people to participate in the mystery of Christ announced in the Gospel⁵. Thus, this article will present some aspects of the Church’s

1 F. Hadjadj, *Antypodręcznik ewangelizacji. Jak dzisiaj mówić o Bogu?*, Kraków 2016, p. 23. Cf. R. Fisichella, *La nuova evangelizzazione. Una sfida per uscire dall'indifferenza*, Milano 2011, pp. 22–25.

2 Jan Paweł II, *Redemptoris missio*, 33.

3 L. Szewczyk, *Głoszenie słowa Bożego w środowisku zsekularyzowanym*, Katowice 2019, pp. 70–75.

4 Jan Paweł II, *Przemówienie do Episkopatu Skandynawii*, „L'Osservatore Romano” wyd. pol. 10 (1989) no. 6, p. 6.

5 Cf. P. Dyk, *Nowa ewangelizacja—konkretne wezwanie*, Gubin 2015, p. 44.

prophetic, priestly, and royal activity that can contribute to this fusion of the Gospel and life. We will look at the prophetic goings-on of the Church from the perspective of homiletics, dealing with the content of preaching. In terms of the priestly mission, we will focus primarily on the celebration of the Eucharist. When referring to the performance of the royal function, we will consider mainly the Christian lifestyle.

1. Preaching the Word of God

In light of research conducted by Polish homilists, it can be concluded that preaching the Word of God may be, to some extent, responsible for the fact that contemporary baptized people succumb to the pressure of the secular world. Research indicates that preaching often oscillates towards doctrinalism, historicism, generalization, and abstraction⁶. With such a proclamation, listeners may perceive faith mainly as an adaptation of a doctrinal and philosophical system or a catalog of moral virtue. It would be a schizophrenic approach to the faith, which – although it requires understanding – is, above all, life. Henceforth, preaching can promote secularism if it does not facilitate “the full understanding and impact of the word of God on the lives of the faithful”⁷.

The method of evangelization should flow from its natural source, which is the Gospel – Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. Linking the Word of God with human life is neither a rhetorical device that would convince people to accept the Gospel content nor a manipulative way of favoring the listener nor a manifestation of modern anthropocentrism – as some impetuous commentators predict⁸. This requirement results from the Mystery of the Incarnation, in which Christ took on what is human to redeem what is human. In preaching, we are faithful to this mystery when we enter the spirituality of human life, revealing what is infected with sin and death in order to create a particular

6 Cf. P. Dyk, H. Sławiński, L. Szewczyk, *Przepowiadanie homilijne w Polsce. Analiza aspektów treściowych i formalnych wybranych homilii*, „Collectanea Theologica” 93 (2023) no. 2, pp. 210–213.

7 Benedykt XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 59.

8 Cf. J. P. Strumiłowski, *Bóg czy człowiek. Duchowość, liturgia, sztuka*, Warszawa 2020, pp. 9–11.

breadth for the redemptive work of Christ and spaces for the Word. Through such proclamation, the redemptive purpose of Christ, who “delights to dwell among men,” is fulfilled⁹. Therefore, preaching is supposed to be—as Henri de Lubac says about theology itself—reflecting on the “real encounter between man and God,” on teaching man to accept God, on the transformation taking place in man under the influence of grace and on the intrusion into his life of “the energy God” and “the power of the Spirit”¹⁰.

Jesus’ earthly life also reveals that the word of God is not only doctrine but, above all, life. His proclamation was confirmed by the importance of concrete deeds—Jesus “did and [...] taught from the beginning” (Acts 1:1). Jesus’ authority consisted in the unity of His word and deed, in the impeccable transparency of His life¹¹. However, the word of God does not distinguish between “saying” and “doing”. It is not a “purely verbal word”. The Gospel is inseparably “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Preaching that does not contribute anything to human life and does not transform it destroys the nature of the word of God. Let us recall that the word of God contains both a noetic and dynamic aspect. The Word of God has the energy that makes the spoken truth, message, prophecy, warning, and consolation become a fact and come to be an event in the one who receives it. Hence, the conciliar Constitution on Divine Revelation emphasizes that in the history of salvation, God reveals himself “through words and deeds that are internally connected” so that one cannot be separated from the other (*Dei verbum* 2). Thus, both are to be present in the Church—teaching (word) and life (action) “internally linked, mutually dependent on each other and pointing to each other. Neither can replace the other nor claim to represent the whole of

⁹ Cf. Kongregacja ds. Duchowieństwa, *Nawrócenie duszpasterskie wspólnoty parafialnej w służbie misji ewangelizacyjnej Kościoła*, n. 5, <https://www.ekai.pl/dokumenty/instrukcja-nawrocenie-duszpasterskie-wspolnoty-parafialnej-w-sluzbie-misji-ewangelizacyjnej-kosciola/> (Sep 20, 2013).

¹⁰ H. de Lubac, *Katolicyzm. Społeczne aspekty dogmatu*, Poznań 2011, p. 214n. The truths of faith are not a deposit of information but an event that transforms and enriches man. Therefore, dogmas are to become spirituality. Cf. P. Boschini, *La questione antropologica come luogo della verità teologica in un contesto plurale*, in: *Teologia dell'evangelizzazione. Fondamenti e modelli a confronto*, a cura di M. Tagliaferri, Bologna 2014, p. 192.

¹¹ B. Sesboüe, *Ewangelia i Tradycja*, Poznań 2012, p. 119.

Christ”¹². The Word of God is proclaimed so that it may once again become an “event” in the existential reality of the people of God. Then—as Benedict VI said— “[it] enters time and space, becoming the interlocutor of the man called to accept His gift in faith”¹³. Preaching is the transposition of biblical truth from Christ (the fullness of Revelation) to the Church and, in it, to each of us.

Therefore, preaching faithful to the nature of God’s Word should affect the listener’s life. It cannot remain without impact on human life. It cannot be just a form of conversation that aims only to interest the listener. Moreover, it cannot be a reference to human life only for illustrative purposes—drawing an example to illustrate the guideline from it¹⁴. It cannot be an abstract instruction, academic lecture, or lesson, although it should contain elements of doctrine. Remember that every truth of faith revealed in the Word of God is not so much for intellectual knowledge as for Christian life. Louis Bouyer aptly expresses this:

The truths of faith were given to us by God primarily so that we could live the life He intended for us. And not that they should serve our speculative knowledge. [...] By speaking to us, He wants to give us life, not food for thought or a toy for imagination¹⁵.

Although every truth of faith first touches the listener’s intellect, it does so in order to encompass his life. It is what Saint is talking about. Thomas Aquinas formulated the definition of faith, which can be expressed as follows: “Faith is accepting the word of God with reason as truth and goodness and making this truth the rule of one’s life” (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 155).

By synthesizing the statements of Church documents and homiletical reflection, it can be said that preaching affects the listener’s life in

¹² H. U. von Balthasar, *Chwała. Estetyka teologiczna*, vol. 1: *Kontemplacja postaci*, Kraków 2008, p. 182.

¹³ Benedykt XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 56.

¹⁴ Cf. R. Hajduk, *Meares agitur. Egzystencjalny aspekt przepowiadania homilijnego*, in: *Homilia integralna. Studium treści przepowiadania homilijnego*, eds. M. Dabrówka, M. Klementowicz, Tarnów 2017, pp. 58–60.

¹⁵ L. Bouyer, *Wprowadzenie do życia duchowego. Zarys teologii ascetycznej i mistycznej*, Warszawa 2014, p. 39.

a double way: it illuminates and questions it. Preaching is, therefore, supposed to display the light that the word of God sheds on human existence and helps discover life's depth and meaning. Through preaching, the Word of God enters into a critical and liberating dialogue with human life—it reveals a new, previously unknown perspective to the faithful and helps them overcome human limitations¹⁶. The Council's Decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam totius*, has a word here of “seeking solutions to human problems in the light of Revelation” (16). Such interpretive preaching reveals human life and vocation in the light of the history of salvation and—above all—in the light of the mystery of Christ, who fulfills this history and recapitulates in Himself the fate of every human being (cf. *Gaudium et spes* 22:38). It also does something more: it forms listeners into the likeness of Christ, persuading them to recreate the fate of Christ in themselves, to fill “what is lacking in Christ's torments” (cf. Col 1:24). Through such proclamation, the preacher brings the word of God closer to human life and confirms that the history of salvation continues in the life of the community, that God acted in it with the same dynamics and purpose with which He worked in the situation outlined in the word of God¹⁷.

Preaching is also intended to influence the lives of listeners by pointing out how God's word questions some aspects of their lives. The point is to expose those dimensions of community life that are inconsistent with the spirit of the Gospel, contrary to the “aspirations” of Christ (cf. Phil 2:5)—with His holiness, with perfect love, with obedience to the will of God, with the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22–23), with humility, love of enemies, etc¹⁸. The preacher must grasp how the word of God exposes the listener's sinfulness, penetrates his interior (cf. Heb 4:12), and reveals in him the remains of the “old man” (cf. 1 Cor 15:31). The Word of God then becomes a criterion of discernment, suggesting what conversion of mind, heart, and life the Lord requires from us. Preaching helps us discern “what God's will is: what is good, what is acceptable

16 Cf. C. Dotolo, *L'annuncio del vangelo. Dal Nuovo Testamento al. Evangelii Gaudium*, Assisi 2015, pp. 102–114.

17 Cf. Franciszek, *Evangelii gaudium*, 47.

18 Cf. Paweł VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 19.

and perfect” (Rom 12:2)¹⁹. The preacher’s function is to bring out the “moment of claim” contained in the word of God, to show the specificity of moral life that requires transformation. Above all, it encourages listeners to be faithful to Christ, who, as a new man, is the model and personal norm of Christian life. Every act and word of Jesus Christ is to be presented as a saving appeal “for us today,” an appeal calling us to conversion and obedience. The life of Christ then becomes the life of a Christian, and the Pascha of Christ becomes the Pascha of a Christian, according to the words of St. Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

2. Celebration of the Eucharist

In a secularized world, the fact that the Eucharist is celebrated so that God’s action can transform a person becomes even more important. From the very nature of the liturgy, “it is clear that knowing the mystery of Christ, which determines our lives, does not consist in the mental assimilation of an idea, but in a real, existential commitment to His person”²⁰. If the liturgy were celebrated without any connection with life, in the eyes of the faithful, it would appear like a solemn ceremony, an empty rite, or the sacred rituals of natural religions. Liturgy, however, concerns God and man. God is at its center—the liturgy is a “holy sacrifice of praise” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2643). This adoration is achieved through thanksgiving for the great works of creation and redemption and through offering a sacrifice in which the Church unites herself with her Savior (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1360–1361)²¹. This spiritual sacrifice of the Church also includes the lives of the faithful who are sanctified in the Eucharist, glorify God through good deeds, and are unified in the paschal act of Christ (cf. Rom 12:1; 1 Pt 2:5). Liturgical worship of God therefore leads to life—to the transformation of man. The liturgy—as Francis says—

¹⁹ Cf. Benedykt XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 87.

²⁰ Franciszek, *Desiderio desideravi*, 41.

²¹ Cf. W. Nowak, *Liturgia jako pieśń nowa ku czci Pana*, „Roczniki Liturgiczne” 1 (2009), pp. 314–315, 318.

gives glory to God not because we can add something to the beauty of the inaccessible light in which He dwells (cf. 1 Tim 6:16), or to the perfection of the angelic song that resounds eternally in the heavenly abode. The liturgy gives glory to God because it allows us here on earth to see God in the celebration of the mysteries and, seeing Him, to become alive with His Pascha: we, who were dead in transgressions, have been made alive again with Christ by grace (cf. Eph 2:5) and we are glory God²².

In contemporary evangelization, the point is that the liturgy also becomes a formative space for existential knowledge of God.

The Eucharist is an inexhaustible source of strength and energy for everyday life. It sustains the new life received in baptism, enabling us to become like Christ. Pope Francis emphasizes: “The celebration concerns the reality of our acquiescence to the action of the Spirit who works in it until Christ is formed in us (cf. Gal 4:19). The fullness of our formation is becoming like Christ. I repeat: it is not about the thought process, an abstract, but becoming Him”²³. However, it should be remembered that God is the primary subject of this formation of man. We do not create union with God and conformity to Christ ourselves, but we receive from Him. “The Eucharistic liturgy is, by its very nature, *actio Dei*, which involves us in Jesus through the Spirit”²⁴. The Eucharist is “a holy and divine liturgy” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1330). This unification and similarity, however, does not take place automatically. Touching the mystery of the Eucharist, man’s effort is needed to open himself to the saving mystery of God: “The temptation is always present in man to reduce the Eucharist to human dimensions, when in fact it is he who should open himself to the dimensions of the mystery”²⁵. This opening to the mystery is an effort to catch Christ, embrace Him, and join Him. Here we touch on the *ars celebrandi* – the art of proper

²² Franciszek, *Desiderio desideravi*, 43. As Pope Francis states: “The glory of God is the manifestation and communication of His goodness, for the sake of which the world was created. God’s plan of kindness was to make us ‘adopted sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to praise the majesty of his grace’ (Eph 1:5–6). It was God’s plan of kindness” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 294).

²³ Franciszek, *Desiderio desideravi*, 41.

²⁴ Benedykt XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 7.

²⁵ Jan Paweł II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*, 14.

celebration, which must be understood in unity with the full, active, and fruitful participation of all the faithful²⁶. In contemporary evangelization, there is a need for liturgical celebration – as Gianfranco Ravasi says – with its *numen* (mystery) and *lumen* (luminosity). It cannot be too “mysterious” at the risk of being reduced to some magical sacramentalism. It cannot be too simplified and aimed only at intellectual understanding, at the risk of reducing it to the rank of a secular party or happening or, on the other hand, to a theological lecture or catechetical instruction. The celebration should be clear, understandable, essential, and existential. At the same time, it should guard mystery, truth, and transcendence²⁷. The observance may only include activities that help open man to the *mysterium*, leading to Christification and divinization, which are the goals of every evangelization²⁸.

The Eucharist also teaches the sacramental perception of human life. The liturgy is enriched by the memory that God entered the history of humanity. It translates into the intensity of feeling and becoming aware of this presence in everyday life²⁹. Pope Francis expressed this awareness: “Look at your own history, and you will find much mercy in it. At the same time, it will strengthen your awareness that the Lord remembers and never forgets you”³⁰. Therefore, it will also be possible to restore to our culture the ability to “notice the particular presence of God and His action in the world”³¹. In other words, it is about faith – “a companion in life that allows us to see anew the miracles that God performs for us constantly”; which convinces us of the truthfulness of Jesus’ words: “My Father is working until now, and I am working” (John 5:17). Such faith does not allow us to look at the world as one that moves forward on its own, chaotically, in a way that makes no

²⁶ Cf. Benedykt XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 37.

²⁷ Cf. G. Ravasi, *Dire Dio in modo bello. Evangelizzazione, arte ed estetica*, in: *Vino nuovo in otri nuovi? Sfide pastorali e giuridiche della nuova evangelizzazione*, a cura di M. Draulich, J. Pudumai Doss, Città del Vaticano 2013, p. 355n.

²⁸ Cf. M. Sodi, *La „nova evangelizatio” comincia anche dall’educazione alla liturgia?*, in: *Vino nuovo in otri nuovi? Sfide pastorali e giuridiche della nuova evangelizzazione*, p. 327.

²⁹ Cf. A. Żądło, *Egzystencjalno-pedagogiczny wymiar Eucharystii*, „Przegląd Homiletyczny” 11 (2007), p. 131.

³⁰ Franciszek, *Gaudete et exultate*, 153.

³¹ Franciszek, *Lumen fidei*, 17.

sense. Our life—our little world shifts according to God’s providential plan³². Human life is full of God’s traces, an example of which can be every crumb of selfless goodness or sacrificial love. Noticing these traces helps a person become rooted in God, “touch” the living God through experiencing His saving action in the world and in one’s own life, and “settle in His mystery,” which encompasses the whole of life. From such a perspective, the liturgy is a symbolic experience of what a person has already experienced in everyday life³³.

The Eucharist also teaches the proper approach to matter. The liturgy consists of elements that are exactly the opposite of spiritual abstractions: bread, wine, oil, water, scent, fire, ash, stone, fabric, colors, body, words, sounds, silence, gestures, space, movement, action, „order, time, and light”³⁴. Matter becomes the material of the Eucharist. It is done under the pedagogy of the Incarnation, in which all creation is accepted and attracted by God’s love. The Gospel says that the Logos did not despise taking a human body and made such peace with it that he could raise it from the dead. We receive part of this peace when we are immersed in Christ’s existence to experience it ourselves. Therefore, a Christian does not view the matter as “something” alien or threatening to his holiness. Eucharistic spirituality teaches that matter can be used for liturgical purposes—to glorify God and sanctify man, that it is possible to reconcile spirit with soul and body, eternity with time, and heaven with earth³⁵. However, this truth is strongly emphasized in the teaching of the Church: “God therefore wills creation as a gift addressed to man, as an inheritance intended for him and entrusted to him. The Church has had to repeatedly defend the truth about the goodness of creation, including the material world” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 299).

³² Cf. H. Stawiński, *Homilia w wprowadzaniem w doświadczenie Boga a kontekst sekularyzmu*, „Przegląd Homiletyczny” 16 (2012), pp. 126–128; L. Szewczyk, *Głoszenie słowa Bożego w środowisku zsekularyzowanym*, pp. 217–218.

³³ Cf. R. Hajduk, *Ewangelia na forum świata. Od apologetyki do marketingu narracyjnego*, Kraków 2013, p. 167.

³⁴ Franciszek, *Desiderio desideravi*, 42.

³⁵ Cf. D. W. Fagerberg, *Consecration of the World as liturgical Act*, „Roczniki Teologiczne” 64 (2017) Issue 8, p. 24.

The Eucharist is, after all, the formation of man so that his entire existence takes on a liturgical shape. Communion with Christ, union with God, is not the ultimate goal of the Eucharist. Getting to know Christ and becoming like Him is completed in everyday life. By its essence, the Eucharist aims to spill the mystery of Christ into the daily life of the faithful. It is the ultimate reality of the Eucharist. First, it is about thanking for the great work of salvation accomplished for us in Christ. It is also expressed in the readiness to recreate the attitude of Christ—the Servant towards the brothers, especially towards the weakest members of the Church. Ultimately, it involves co-offering oneself to God—as is done during the Eucharistic prayer—after anamnesis (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 48). This offering of oneself to God is a constant process that goes beyond the framework of every Eucharistic celebration and consists of presenting love in life through all attitudes and actions³⁶.

3. “Diakonia” as the formation of the world in the spirit of the Gospel

Christian evangelization has always been alien to isolationism and exclusivism. The Church has been and should always be open to the world³⁷. This openness should not be understood in the sense of moral liberalism or progressivism, as is sometimes claimed in journalistic discourse. This openness to the world means, first of all, presence in the world in order to bring into it the newness contained in the Gospel. A Christian is always alien to rejecting and exorcising the world and matters as evil in themselves. It is worth recalling that the Christian tradition assesses the world in two ways. Sometimes, it is an object of acceptance: “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (John 3:16),

36 G. Strzelczyk, *Sakrament Eucharystii*, in: *Znaki tajemnicy. Sakramenty w teorii i praktyce Kościoła*, eds. K. Porosło, R. J. Woźniak, Kraków 2018, p. 387; A. Żądło, *Egzystencjalno-pedagogiczny wymiar Eucharystii*, p. 133.

37 Andrzej Zuberbier notes that “the dualism of temporal and eternal life, earthly and heavenly life, but not of the ‘Church’ and the ‘world,’ was strongly expressed in the Christian consciousness”. Only the process of de-Christianization and secularization in modern times contrasted the Church with the world and led to the Church closing in on herself. A. Zuberbier, „Człowiek droga Kościoła”: o eklezjologii Jana Pawła II, „*Studia Theologica Varsaviensia*” 28 (1990) no. 1, p. 159.

and sometimes of rejection: “Do not love the world or the things in the world! If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). This means that God can love the world, can be divine and sacramental. It may also be corrupt and evil. It all depends on how a person uses the world. The world can be holy and theophanic if a man makes it as God wanted it, if he treats matter, himself, and other people with love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, etc. (cf. Gal 5:22–23). In other words: “faith in the One God allows us to use everything that is not God to the extent that it brings us closer to Him” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 226). The world can be corrupt and only temporal when man functions in it without reference to God when he treats himself and matters as an end in itself when he distorts everything towards himself in egoistic desire and absorption to satisfy his frightened “I”, when in his life—as Francis says—there are “nervous and violent anxiety [...], negative attitudes and sadness; convenient consumption and selfish acedia; individualism and many forms of false spirituality devoid of encounter with God”³⁸. In other words, the world becomes evil when man infects it with sin—when he brings pride, lust, greed, unhealthy ambition, strife, envy, drunkenness, etc. (cf. Rom 13:13).

Evangelization and Christian holiness, therefore, do not involve an escape from the world to some “holy ghettos” but mean the re-establishment of proper relationships between everything in the world and God. As Fabrice Hadjadj emphasizes, Christianity does not tear us away from the world and transport us “into space” or make us think only about life after death, nor does it make us push away creation to make room for the Creator. This approach to faith is the easiest way for atheists to be born—they move the Creator away to make room for creation. They think that Christianity despises life and is against the body. On the other hand, Christianity is so concerned with life that it wants to preserve and transform it. When we think about eternity, it is to bring it into the present and everyday life. So, God expects us to love creation as He does and to contribute to its development according to God’s thought³⁹.

³⁸ Franciszek, *Gaudete et exultate*, 111.

³⁹ Cf. F. Hadjadj, *Antypodęcznik ewangelizacji*, p. 51–64.

The realization of Christian holiness consists in courageously turning to the world and being present in it to make it what God wanted it to be⁴⁰. As the American liturgical theologian David W. Fagerberg says, we are not torn from this world like a tooth being pulled from its socket. This understanding is the mistake of Gnostic spirituality, which has never learned how to reconcile spirit with soul, eternity with time, and heaven with earth⁴¹. It is secularism that tries to disconnect the world from God. Modern evangelization protects man from this diabolical (divisive) approach that prevents heaven and earth from uniting. The contemporary style of evangelization consists of introducing the glory of God into the material world following the words of St. Paul: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do everything to the glory of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 10:31). You can be a Christian, therefore, in everything you do and wherever you are (cf. *Ad gentes divinitus*, 11). The point is simply to—to quote Francis—“fill all ordinary things with extraordinary perfection”⁴². This perfection is only sacrificial and unconditional love—the Love of the Risen One⁴³. Then, the heavenly liturgy of the Lamb permeates every aspect of people’s life. It is why *Lumen gentium* describes lay Christians as those bound to Christ’s mission and anointed by the Holy Spirit. As a result, they consecrate the world where they live, and “all their works, prayers and apostolic undertakings, married and family life, daily work, rest of spirit and body” become spiritual sacrifices (cf. *Lumen gentium*, 34). These offerings are offered with the utmost reverence to the Father during the celebration of the Eucharist, together with the offering of the Lord’s Body. In this way, lay people, as pious worshipers of God everywhere, sanctify the world for Him⁴⁴. It is the priestly task to which all the baptized are called. Saint Gregory the Great

40 Cf. J. Scott, *Tutta la chiesa deve portare tutto il Vangelo a tutto il mondo. Un commento al patto di Losanna*, Chieti–Roma 2010, p. 17.

41 Cf. D. W. Fagerberg, *Consecration of the World as liturgical Act*, 24.

42 Franciszek, *Gaudete et exultate*, 17.

43 In his exhortation on holiness, Francis indicates several “wonderful ways” of manifesting this perfection: patient perseverance in goodness, gentleness, humility, joy that is a consequence of love, community life, and constant prayer. Cf. Franciszek, *Gaudete et exultate*, 112–157.

44 Cf. D. W. Fagerberg, *Consecration of the World as liturgical Act*, p. 28.

will say that if there is love, mutual respect, and care among believers, then “they will lead a life on earth worthy of angels”⁴⁵.

Through baptism, however, God created new people who, through sacrificial love, make this world divine. And God doesn’t put these people on some holy shelf. He wants to populate the earth with them so they may be there as a sign of life. God placed Christians on earth to bring the Gospel into this world, which is the power of life and an explosion of newness. God’s word can penetrate, interpret, and save every generation, place, and culture. “It can relativize and deepen each generation’s values and behavioral norms”⁴⁶. The Second Vatican Council, displaying the internal reason for the existence of the Church, indicates that the point is to bring God’s holiness into this world. The fact is that capacity and space be made in the world for God to dwell there and that this world may become His “kingdom” (cf. *Lumen gentium*, 4–7). Therefore, evangelization does not promote secular humanism but the pursuit of such a transformation of man’s relationships with creatures and other persons that they gain divine depth. Only by being in this world can Christians become its “leaven,” “salt” and “light” (cf. Mt 5:13–16). It is one of the reasons why Pope Francis talks about parrhesia—about evangelizing “boldness and enthusiasm.” Parrhesia is also the ability to live an open life available to God and brothers (cf. Acts 4:29; 9:28; 28, 31; 2 Cor 3:12; Eph 3:12; Heb 3:6; 10, 19). Parrhesia is the boldness of evangelization that forces us to overcome fear and temptation so that we do not get used to “moving only within safe limits” so that we do not run away “to a safe place”, “to an area we know”, to “lock ourselves in small worlds”⁴⁷.

When justifying the above style of evangelization, we should again refer to its source—the Gospel. In the mystery of the incarnation, Christ assumed human nature and everything related to life at a given time and history (culture). At the same time, Jesus introduces the newness of the Gospel into the religious and social context of his time and people. Jesus’ attitude towards the culture of his time can be expressed in three words: presence, universality, and transcendence. Jesus engaged

45 Św. Grzegorz Wielki, *Walcz dzielnie w obronie wiary*, in: *Liturgia godzin*, vol. 4, Poznań 1998, p. 51–64.

46 Papieska Komisja Biblijna, *Interpretacja Biblii w Kościele*, 87.

47 Franciszek, *Gaudete et exultate*, 129.

and was fully present in the culture of his people and time. By assuming human nature in a specific time and place, Jesus united with every person living in history (universality). By accepting human nature, he does not destroy it but elevates it in dignity and sublimates it (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 22). Therefore, Jesus “cannot seem a stranger to anyone and in any place” (*Ad gentes divinitus*, 8). Universality is a characteristic feature of Christianity, which can settle into the culture of any time and place because nothing alienates it⁴⁸. Transcendence is expressed in the fact that Jesus does not accept every form of culture, including religious culture. He severely criticizes formalism – “human traditions” (Mark 7:8) and the hypocrisy of contemporary religiosity. He clearly and decisively reveals the transcendence of all cultures, including Hebrew, which he often contests and purify. We can, therefore, say that Jesus transcends all culture⁴⁹ by striving to consecrate and divinize it. Thus, presence, universality, and transcendence are eternally valid features of church evangelization.

* * *

The synthesis of the Gospel and life as the goal of evangelization is part of the realization of the modern Church, for which “man is the first and fundamental way”⁵⁰. Man is also the basic path for evangelization. Not in the sense that he was its only and most important point of reference, its only principle and reason. Its source, norm, and end is always the life of the Triune God. Its starting point and basis is always the Gospel, which has eternal potential for novelty and originality. Man is the path of evangelization in the sense that its main goal is to lead man to participate in the life of God. Evangelization aims to transform man and, through him, the entire world in its axiological, ethical, social, economic, and political dimension. In other words, the reason for the existence of the Church is to bring God’s life into the world around it, to inculturate the Gospel. Without this goal, evangelism would be merely

48 Cf. P. L. Cabri, *Provocazioni dell’inculturazione al magistero e della teologia*, in: *Teologia dell’evangelizzazione. Fondamenti e modelli a confronto*, a cura di M. Tagliaferri, Bologna 2014, p. 347.

49 P. Dyk, *Nowa ewangelizacja – konkretne wezwanie*, p. 235n.

50 Jan Paweł II, *Redemptor hominis*, 14.

superficial indoctrination. Without knowing the main motive of evangelization, its starting and reaching point, all diagnoses and evangelization initiatives may be “external” or oscillate towards fundamentalism and moralism.

The following article presents some aspects of the existential orientation of contemporary evangelization. In implementing the prophetic function, it was emphasized that the proclamation of the Word of God is to illuminate and transform human existence. Christ is proclaimed in order to become the center of human existence. Yet, it requires overcoming the intellectualist view of faith. In implementing the priestly function, the focus was on celebrating the Eucharist, showing it as a source of human strength and energy, a school of sacramental perception of life and appreciation of matter, and a space for forming a new man. In the implementation of the priestly function, attention was paid to the presence of the Church in the world and the Christian lifestyle, which is closely related to the promotion of man and the quality of his life.

The existential orientation of evangelization establishes the proper relationship of the Church with the world, which consists in welcoming it and dialogue with it, as suggested by the Second Vatican Council. Evangelization occurs in listening and dialogue with specific manifestations of culture through which a person expresses himself. To reject the modern world from above would mean denying the goodness of creation, the mystery of the Incarnation, the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and the universality of the Church. Thus, the church must be open, hospitable, and close but simultaneously authentic. The Church is present in the world in order to cleanse the world of what is alien to the spirit of the Gospel and make it pleasing to God. Hence, the world is the basic path on which the work of man’s salvation and liberation is to be accomplished.

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