

## *Introduction*

The debate on clericalism in ecclesiastical structures is an important point on the map of contemporary disputes over the shape of ecclesial communities. On the doctrinal level, we touch upon the dignity of secular and clerical persons, leading to the question of the universal priesthood of believers, *sensus fidelium* and theological empowerment of hierarchical offices in the management of the Church. The proposed solutions are linked with some practical consequences, as they postulate modifications in the mode of decision-making at the parish, diocesan and central levels, provoke changes in the procedures of the bishops' election, and suggest the creation of grassroots counseling and control bodies.

One of the most sensitive areas within the framework of reflection on the role of the laity in the Church is the inclusion of women at various levels of its functioning. It seems that as far as the participation of men and women in the management is concerned, the Catholic Church is significantly different from the majority of religious communities, and completely fails to fit into the contemporary models implemented by secular institutions. Women themselves are more and more self-aware and many of them demand changes in the teaching of the Church, at points that they recognize to be discriminatory against their gender.

In the current issue of „Theological Research,” we propose a reflection on the above-mentioned problems. It has a two-track character. On the one hand, the authors analyze historical and cultural factors, pointing to their implication for the evolution of doctrine, and thus look for the foundations of the current state of ecclesiastical teaching. However, retrospective analyses and syntheses are just a starting point for discussion on the change of perspectives. What should be done to give more importance to the *sensus fidei* of believers in reshaping new interpretations of the truths of faith and morals? How to define lay people in a positive way (currently they are mainly defined as non-clergy)? To what extent could women be included in the Church governance process? Where is the modification of teaching necessary because the current one takes into account mainly the male perspective? More and less comprehensive solutions to these and similar problems can be found on the following pages of this academic journal.

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