

The Place of New Evangelization in the Parish's Pastoral Work

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The article presents a vision of New Evangelization, which assumes going out of the Church community with the Gospel to the world. New Evangelization today is the mission of the whole Church. This task, although directly concerning the relationships of the community of Christ with the external world, and primarily assumes its constant inner renewal, with which is tied change in roles that every member of the Church fulfils: at one time they are evangelized, the other time they evangelize. These roles must be fulfilled by both clerics and secular believers: in one of the situations they are evangelists, in the other they are students in Christ's school of Gospel.

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The basic task of the Church is salvatory work, which the ecclesial community conducts through priesthood. Salvatory work is assisted by apostleship and evangelization. The current hierarchy of pastoral spheres is as follows: 1. ministry – accomplishing salvatory instrumentation (servitude, priesthood). Priest – the shepherd who leads his sheep (flock) to salvation. He is a guide sign that is excluded from earthly reality. He is separate from the world of secular believers, he is independent, autonomous and self sufficient. In a so presented priesthood, each priest is alone in carrying out his duties. Under the influence of current shifts in priesthood priests have to become open to cooperation and dialogue with secular believers, that is why salvatory work is part of apostleship; 2. apostleship – this is the work in which the priest leaves the "Church" and walks among the worshippers. He enters their everyday life and learns to recognize their daily life problems. The priest-apostle among worshippers is one of them, he is a Christian. He cannot use his institutional authority (the authority of priestly ordination) and his apostolic plans should be accomplished on the basis of personal and human authority; he can be a teacher, provide counsel, educate others, but without calling upon his insti-

tutional authority. For apostles work basing on charisms;¹ 3. evangelization – in this domain all differences disappear – all become Christ's students, who is their Master. The priest walks among worshippers as one of the students of Christ's school. However, it does not mean that he is its best student. But he can impress many secular students with his skills.²

Under the influence of the recent new challenges to evangelization a slow process of defining the Church's priorities in its pastoral work is being carried out. New Evangelization is becoming more and more important, and everyone can participate in it without any prerequisites: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mk 16:15) Evangelization leads Christians to apostolic engagement in the world, and in the Church. Whereas apostleship becomes an indispensable compliment to the salvatory (priestly) work of the Church it carries out under the leadership of hierarchy.³

New Evangelization is "a new impulse, a new engagement, new methods, a new enthusiasm".⁴ In its essence, New Evangelization means the Church commune coming out to the world with the Word of God. Carrying out this task will only be possible when taking into account the basic theological rules, which are the fundamentals of the practical implications of New Evangelization. First, every Christian must realize that the Gospel is the "good" news and good is widespread as a feature of its spreading to the world. *Bonum est diffusivum sui* – this philosophical definition of good points Christians to a very important road of proclaiming and accomplishing the Gospel's ideas in their lives. Wherever the seeds of the Gospel are sown, good will spring, a good from which happiness, good spirit, beauty and wisdom always come.

Good in its pure form exists only in God. Man is good by nature, but only God, the Giver of life, is the Source of Good. That is why man, to be able

- 1 The definition of apostleship before the II Vatican Council: converting to the Church – unification, including in the functions of the Church – clerigified and monasticized spirituality, an opposition to the world; after the II Vatican Council: giving Christian testament in the world and then looking for one's place in the Church.
- 2 Priestly training should be perceived in a perspective in which man must first be formed (human formation), then that man is formed into a Christian (Christian formation) and then that Christian is formed into a priest (priestly formation). These three aspects of Christ's mission cannot be left out throughout the priest's life.
- 3 "The Church's mission drives toward human salvation, which will be achieved through faith in Christ and His mercy. And so the Church's and its members' apostleship drives first and foremost towards showing Christ's evangelical message to the world with word and action and giving it His mercy. It is mostly done through the service of word and sacraments especially entrusted to the clergy and in which also seculars have their role to fulfil so «that we may work together for the truth» (3 Jn 1:8) And, primarily, in this field do they compliment each each: secular apostleship and priestly service." VATICAN COUNCIL II: Decree on the Apostleship of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 6.
- 4 The explanation to what the "newness" in evangelization is about was given by John Paul II during his apostolic journey to South America for the 500th anniversary of the continent's evangelization: "The mention of a 500 year evangelization will reach its full meaning if it is a full engagement of you, the bishops, along with your priest and believers; engaging in not another evangelization, but in a New Evangelization indeed. New in its enthusiasm, methods and expression." JOHN PAUL II: Speech addressed to the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM). In: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 4, 1983, 4, p. 29.

to share his inner good, needs God. Whereas those who do not share their inner good will be sad, worrisome, discouraged and lost. And that is a straight road towards losing faith, which ultimately leads to life losing its meaning.

At the basis of New Evangelization lies the truth that its first goal is to always submissively submit to the selfless actions of the Risen Spirit, who accompanies those who proclaim the Gospel and opens the hearts of those, who listen. "To effectively proclaim the Gospel, one needs to have a deep conviction of God."⁵

New Evangelization today is the mission of the whole Church. This mission, although directly concerning the relations between the community of Christ and the external world, it foremost assumes constant renewal, with which are tied changes of roles that every member of the Church fulfils: being the evangelist and being evangelized.⁶ Such roles must also be fulfilled by priests as well as secular believers: one day they are evangelists, the other day they are students in Christ's school of Gospel.

Clerics – evangelists

Contemporary clerics, in traditional religious societies also, must proclaim the basic (the most primary and the simplest) truths, whose source was the Gospel. By taking up the mission of evangelization, it should be assumed that faith and a high level of religious knowledge of Christians do not have to go hand-in-hand, which means they do not need to have a direct relationship with each other. According to the teachings of Revelation proclaimed the Gospel gives birth to faith,⁷ and religious knowledge creates more or less favorable conditions for its acceptance. That is why New Evangelization is necessary both for people of great religious education as well as religious simpletons, for faith is always fuelled by the God's Word. And the characteristics of this Word are simplicity, accessibility, clarity, openness, honesty. Priests should thus assume that as evangelists they always deal with simple people who need a simple testament of the Word and not theological lectures.⁸

5 BENEDICT XVI: *Ubicumque et semper*. Apostolic letter creating the Pontifical Council for promoting the New Evangelization (21. 9. 2010). This thought was already presented in the encyclical *Deus Caritas est*. "In the beginning of being Christian there is no ethical decision or any great ideal, however, there is a meeting with the event, with the Person, who gives life a new perspective, all the same the deciding direction." BENEDICT XVI: Encyclical *Deus Caritas est*, 1 (25. 12. 2005).

6 Cf. BENEDICT XVI: *Ubicumque et semper*. Apostolic letter creating the Pontifical Council for promoting the New Evangelization (21. 9. 2010).

7 "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ." (Rom 10:17)

8 "New times require (...), that the Christian message be proclaimed to the contemporary man using new methods and the message should be expressed in simple language and form so that the evangelical answers to the questions of men of our times are understandable, sensible and deep, but at the same time it should not violate or distort the contents of the evangelical message." JOHN PAUL II: New Evangelization, Human Progress, Christian Culture [*Nowa ewangelizacja, postęę człowieka, kultura*]

Clerics can help every man, under the condition that they are close to him. A priest who is distant from man, or has too high conditions for proclaiming the Word, will never get the man where he wants. John Paul II spoke of this clearly: "The stimulus for New Evangelization cannot be readiness to «to please people» and «seek their favour» (cf. Gal 1:10), but the responsibility for the gift that God made in Christ, in which we can learn the truth about God and man, and receive real life."⁹

In the work of New Evangelization one rule is very important: man needs other people first, and as much as he needs good and love needs love – this rule shows that human "inner" signs of religiousness (piety) should be changed into spiritual – "inner" good for the soul. Whereas this task is not only for clerics, but for every Christian.

In order to become an evangelist, priests must first have constant contact with the secular world, which is the best school of humanity. I dare formulate in this place the following pastoral truth: before a priest becomes a cleric, he must first become an evangelist. For evangelists have the duty to make contact with man on human level. That, which would be hard to accept for a cleric, is possible to accept for an evangelist. If the priest forgets about this, whether he is a vicar or a rector, then he may never become a cleric. For it is impossible to transition from priesthood to clergy without evangelization.

A priest without a human face will not become a cleric. And what rector or vicar is not a cleric? These values do not come together automatically. That is why in parishes priests can be rectors or vicars without being clerics and in such parishes there is no clergy and the parish is only a place of sacramental service, fairly well administrated, which can be showed in the reports presented to the diocesan curia.

In New Evangelization the rules that what is spiritual should be hidden from human sight so that what is human can become the basis of inter human communication. In this place I shall present a probably controversial thesis – people are drawn to the Church by the personality of its priest. For a priest with a human face is real to them, an authentic cleric, whom they will listen and to whom they will show their obedience. A cleric like that is respected and loved by the parishioners. So is priestly holiness not the most important? It is! But what kind of holiness is one without humanity?

Whereas the humanized holiness of the cleric allows him to make contact with every man. The goal of such priestly meetings is to convince a specific man that he is known and accepted by the cleric just the way he is, in the most personal dimension. Whereas this allows that person to feel like a member

chrześcijańska]. Speech delivered for the inauguration of the proceedings of the IV General Episcopal Conference of Latin America. In: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 13, 1992, 12, p. 24.
9 JOHN PAUL II: New Evangelization, Human Progress, Christian Culture. In: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 13, 1992, 12, p. 24.

of the parish community. People usually expect from the cleric that they are recognized and led, and thanks to this closeness they feel God's love stronger.¹⁰

Secular believers – evangelists

Christ, by proclaiming the Gospel, showed miraculous signs in order to inspire people to accept God's Word. Thanks to them they could believe in His salvatory teachings. Contemporary Christians do not have the wonderful goods known from the Gospel, and proclaiming the Gospel is no longer accompanied by visible signs. There is no such need, for Christians are not called for this kind of Christianity. Their basic duty is to listen and proclaim God's Word, whose salvatory power comes from Christ, to others. However, it is a spiritual power, because God's Word is inscribed in the human heart. Christians, through faith, make God's Word constantly manifest itself in their hearts. A metaphor could be used to say that in the heart of each believer the hand of the Lord constantly write new rules of the Gospel. Because it is a law of the spirit, external signs, which would confirm its salvatory power, are not necessary.

Whereas the essence of New Evangelization in the existential meaning should constantly drive towards becoming a "child". In his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus explained that it is not about being reborn as a human being, but about being reborn from water and the Spirit, to enter God's Kingdom (Jn 3:5-8). This truth demands a more precise explanation.

One of the anecdotes treats of a woman who had found her husband's preschool description: "he eats properly, plays well and has no trouble sleeping". After 30 years... this is still accurate. Initially, this anecdote only made me laugh, but after a time I began giving it more thought. For there is a great truth hidden in this short story. Each of us thinks that our goal in life is to constantly change, strive towards perfection, gaining meaning, becoming wiser, better, more mature. However, this most often only concerns the human sphere. But the truth is that change should be in the spirit of man, his heart. This is man's main goal.

Being wise, wealthy, known and respected are not signs of maturity and holiness. For man is man because he eats, sleeps, works and plays. This cannot be changed, although people, more or less, manage to mix various aspects of being human into one. That is why we call some people lazy, cheap, know-it-all, playboy, all-serious. However, what was formed from flesh is flesh. In reality, earthly life is about something completely different. What was born from the spirit is spiritual – what counts is what inspires faith in human life. Listening to the Gospel, man entrusts himself to God's salvatory power and becomes unpredictable: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest

¹⁰ JOHN PAUL II: Letter to priests for Maundy Thursday, 9 (17. 3. 2002).

the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." (Jn 3:5-8)

In the spiritual sphere man becomes different in a "new" way, which in the Gospel sense means that "he becomes better". The art of living by faith is in remaining unchanged in the human dimension (constancy here is a space-time related trait: earthly time and earthly reality), submit oneself to the salvatory power of God's Word, which makes man change into a saint.

The meeting of the cleric and the secular believer in the process of New Evangelization

The goal of priestly evangelization is to point believers towards the road of eschatological reality. This task is carried out by clerics in their clerical service. Priestly evangelization has other goals, however. Firstly, it should be assumed that priestly evangelization is not about giving advice to believers to have an interesting and good life in the world. The cleric cannot be someone who gives good advice, who finds solutions to all human problems. A priest-evangelist will, however, meet with people who need to realize the meaning of spiritual development. However, one basic rule applies here: the rules that dictate everyday human life cannot be changed, but must be accepted.

Whereas in the spiritual sense the evangelical mission of the priest and secular believer meets in faith. The priest's and the secular's faith are both born from hearing God's Word. That is why both are in Christ's school and are students, because the only Teacher and Master there is Christ Himself. In both of their lives the only important thing should be to participate in increasing faith. Caring about this should be done by both sides. A cleric may never ask himself "What do I care? Let everyone do as they want, I have upkeep, I have respect; (...) let everyone go, where they want. Do you think that you are safe when everyone goes where they can go? It is not necessary that you be the shepherd, it is enough that you are part of the flock: «If one member suffers, the other members also suffer»" (Sermon 46:6-7). These words of st. Augustine leave no doubt – all of Christ's students have one goal in evangelization: care for others, care for their spiritual development, listen to the Gospel and proclaim it to others, strengthen their own and others' faith, especially the weakest, to follow them into eternity.

The Church may fulfil the evangelical mission by focusing its actions on the two basic tasks of New Evangelization. Firstly, proclaiming the Gospel should lead to a proper reading and understanding of the evangelical message, which will be a basis for meeting and starting a dialogue with God (salvatory instrumentation) to Christians. Secondly, proclaiming the Good News should

allow man to experience God and help him understand his humanity at the same time – the salvatory process. New Evangelization discovers the proper dependence between salvatory instrumentation and the salvatory process – the latter being the most important. Only the Gospel allows to experience God and understand who man is, as well as form a dynamic relation between man and God. This means that without constant, New Evangelization supernatural faith cannot exist or last, and especially develop, and faith's fullest expression is a more perfect and fuller relationship between man and God.

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