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SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AS THE MODE  
OF MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY WITHIN A PARISH FROM  
THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING  
“THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS”

**A b s t r a c t.** After the Velvet Revolution and twenty years of freedom in the Slovak society and the Catholic Church in Slovakia the Church looks for the new way for a pastoral work. She decided to make the pastoral plan for the next decade of these years and now we have the second “version” of it. The new *Pastoral Plan of the Catholic Church in Slovakia for the years 2007-2013* asks for the new potential especially in the field of social work in our parishes. It makes some conclusions about the situation and shows the new forms of work for some groups of the structure of the Slovak society. This article illustrates the situation which was before the Plan was made and shows some conditions which the plan is going to change. All this situation is just the beginning for the next step in the new dimension of the pastoral help, and pastoral care, in the multicultural community like our society already is.

**Key words:** pastoral work, pastoral plan, Church, socialistic past, social work, charity.

As in all other countries of nowadays Europe, or I am not afraid to say of all countries in the world, the most modern but also useful and needed moment of work of all kinds of institutions and subjects is “*social responsibility*” and the social dimension of work.<sup>1</sup> So social work must be important also for the Catholic Church. Not just because it is modern at this time, but because Christian love asks for such work in these modern age. The Church

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<sup>1</sup> All websites of any kinds of institutions say that all these institutions want to work with “no environmental ballast” and with big portion of “social responsibility” and with big ethics responsibility.

has made such work all over the world throughout the whole of her history. We can see this in history of the Slovak Catholic Church as well. She always did this work, social work, and we know a lot of important social projects and works and we know many institutions which were established for this work in the field of the Church.

I want to mention the new field of social work which is the parish. The parish is not the new subject in the structure of the Church. It is the traditional and the basic subject for any kind of work which the Catholic Church undertakes.<sup>2</sup> But right now the Slovak Catholic Church is in a situation which asks for a new beginning for social work and new models of work. This is like a reaction to the new political and social structure of the Slovak society after the Velvet revolution and as an answer to all changes in the Slovak society and the globalization trends in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

We can say that the anti-communist revolution (twenty years ago), or as we say the Velvet Revolution, was the first beginning for the renovation of the Catholic Church's work and its potential, especially for pastoral care. For many years the Catholic Church in Slovakia had no freedom and its life and work was under the pressure and control of the communist party and socialist state institutions. Besides the liturgy, the church had no other opportunities for free work in any fields of the society.<sup>4</sup> Now, after the big political

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<sup>2</sup> We know that from the beginning of the Church, we can see many and various areas for the work of the Church. We can place them in many fields. The Pastoral Plan of the Slovak Catholic Church mentions some of these areas of work: liturgy, evangelization, catechesis, pastoral care, diakonia, martyria, koinonia. Cf. <http://www.kbs.sk/documents/pdf/pep/pep-2007.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The same statement is made by Ladislav Lentz in his article in the Internet magazine *Communio*, which can also be found in the Pastoral Plan of the Slovak Catholic Church. He says that: "spoločnosť, v ktorej žijeme, sa radikálne zmenila, ale naše pastoračné metódy a formácia kňazov sa týmto zmenám prispôsobujú len miestami, nedôsledne alebo pomaly". (The society in which we live has totally or radically changed, but the pastoral methods and formation of priests have changed just a little, or just in some places and areas, or very inconsistently or very slowly). L. L e n t z, *Výskum religiosity pomáha čítať znamenia čias*. In: *Communio* (Internet edition) 3(2007) – <http://www.communio.sk/index.php?issue=32>

<sup>4</sup> The liturgy was just one of the many fields of work which the Slovak Catholic Church was able to do much more than any other kinds of work. However we cannot say that the Church had real freedom in the field of liturgy. It was a little better than in the other spheres of life. On the other hand we can say, that the Church could do much more than in other spheres. It was because the Slovak society was, and I am not afraid to say, is still Christian society. Many people came and still come to churches for the Holy Mass on Sundays. The communists were afraid to do something against the liturgy, because the situation in the society could be turbulent. On the other hand, regime used this situation for socialist propaganda

change in Slovakia, the Catholic Church has started the renovation of her potential and her work. We already had two decades for the new life of the Church.

In the first decade of these years, the Church started to renovate a lot of buildings: churches and parish buildings in the whole country. It was one of the big issues in these times, besides all of the programs and projects which the Church has made all the time – some kind of charity and so on. Also she started some new projects which she had to do because it was necessary, like the teaching of religion in all kinds of schools as a part of education, preparing the new catechists for this work, and so on. Except of renovation we built a lot of new buildings, especially in our diocese, the diocese of Košice, predominantly churches, a lot of parish houses and parish pastoral centers, etc. This part of our post-socialist period is known as “the stone age”. We had given our money to the “stones” and buildings.<sup>5</sup>

In the second decade after the Revolution we can see some change in the priority of the Church’s work. The priority is not buildings anymore. The new dimension of the work is the social situation in the country and especially establishment of new social programs. But they still have not achieved such a progress as they could. I have been seeing this change in our diocese (Košice) and we can see this in the whole life of the Church until nowadays.

This point of view depends on the information of how much money all Slovak dioceses gave to the buildings in those years and how much money the Church and dioceses gave to the studies and formation of the new theologians, of the new specialists for specialized fields of work and for pastoral work as well.<sup>6</sup> We can say that the character of these years is the main issue

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about religious freedom. The other benefit which helped to the field of liturgy of the Church was the fact that the ownership of churches was in the hand of the Church and so she did not need much special permissions for making liturgy any time.

<sup>5</sup> The name “the stone age” I had heard for the first time from one of my friends and colleague of the academic field. His inspiration was maybe the book with the name – “A kamene rastú” (And the stones grow) which was printed in 1995 which shows many of the new buildings which were made in our diocese. (The title of the book came of the situation when the pope John Paul II. had blessed many memorial stones for new churches which were planned to be built. It happened on his first visit in Slovakia in April 22, 1990. When the book was printed many of these churches were still not finished and many of them are shown in this book as building sites. The book was printed very soon, in 1995. After this time many other building projects were started in the first decade after the revolution. Cf. M. S i t a r č í k. *A kamene rastú*. In: M. S i t a r č í k, F. Š á n d o r, J. Š e c h n ý (ed.). *A kamene rastú – naše nové kostoly*, Prešov: Anna Nagyová 1995.

<sup>6</sup> I have no real information about the real quantity of spent money. It would be very

of work in this period in the life of the Slovak Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> The beginning of the third millennium was a big opportunity to make major decisions and it was seen as the right moment for a new beginning of some special types or the special ways of work. The church in Slovakia decided to prepare a project, which should be a plan for evangelization and pastoral work in the first years of the second decade. In 2000 the Church prepared the first *Evangelical and Pastoral Plan of the Catholic Church in Slovakia for the years 2001-2006*.<sup>8</sup> I have been a member of the commission for social problems of the society and for social questions. The plan was prepared and printed in a book version which was distributed to all catholic parishes and Slovak catholic institutions. The book was put in the libraries and the consequences for the pastoral work were not obligatory or compulsory but voluntary and individual. At least it was the response of one of the bishops to the question of his parish priest. He said: if you want to use it, it depends just on you. You have the help for your pastoral work. And he said further, the plan has no common and compulsory obligation for any one of you.

After the next six years the Slovak Catholic Church started to prepare the next plan: *The Pastoral Plan of the Catholic Church in Slovakia for years 2007-2013*. The plan was printed out and the books came to libraries. For the first time we made it available for public use on the official website, from the beginning of the publishing.<sup>9</sup> From the first plan we saw that even if we have

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important to count the whole amount of money which was spent for buildings. Together with this statement I must say, that the amount of money I am talking about is not just money which had been invested in the dioceses directly, but it is money which was invested by all parishes together. It means all parishes in whole dioceses of Slovakia together. Now after a couple of years a new situation may emerge. It is time to find money for paying some new helpers and specialists for other types of work on all levels of church institutions. It means not just in the diocese's work but for all kind work in the whole parishes. We need then not just to deal with the problems in the dioceses work but also for each small parish which must work in the conditions which need help (pastoral help, or charity help, or social and solidarity help) for people in all kinds of problems.

<sup>7</sup> We do not have to forget about other works which the Church in Slovakia did in this period as well. Then we started or at least much more opened the teaching of religion in the schools, and so we had to prepare many catechists as the volunteers for this project. Then we started re-opening or establishing new seminaries, starting of new catholic radio and television and other works in all the dioceses in Slovakia.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. <http://slovhumanist.nazory.cz/Pastorac-%20evanjeliza.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Cf. <http://www.kbs.sk/documents/pdf/pep/pep2007.pdf>. The public disclosure of the Plan from the beginning it was made was very unusual. In other cases the official editor for Catholic Bishop Conference as the official institution for printing all things for the Slovak Catholic Church did not do this because of the business. The official documents were printed out as the

had prepared the new structures of institutions for new ways of social and charity work or if we have had more staff, maybe volunteers, who wanted to help the Church with her work, we cannot change everything for now or at once. The Church emphasized some areas which would be the key issues for the main pastoral work in the next sixth years or even longer. The main issues are the families, the youth and the socially dependent people – the poor and homeless, the ones in need. The plan is still waiting for its realization.

In the commissions which worked on the preparing of the Plan were a lot of good and responsible Catholics. Many of them were later nominated to the committees and councils of the Catholic Bishop Conference, and it is really logical that they want to realize the plan.<sup>10</sup> As an example we can use the Commission for Social Questions. All members especially lay persons of the Commission, ask the bishop conference for support and permission to ask parish priests in all parishes from all dioceses for help with the new dimension of social work. The Plan has much good advice and recommends to build some new structures especially of the network of new volunteers in all parishes around Slovakia for the new dimension of social work.<sup>11</sup> It is the

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books and everybody had to buy it. The documents were given to the websites after long time, or even after many years.

<sup>10</sup> Especially it is the Social Committee of the Bishops Conference of Slovakia which asks for realization of the recommendations of the Plan especially in the social questions. But this could be also the committee IUSTITIA ET PAX, which did not at the time when the Plan was prepared. In 2010 it was restored. Among them could be counted also Committee for the Questions of Roma Minority, which works all the time and many of its members were active with preparing the Plan. Cf. M. U h á Ľ. *Riešenie sieťovania a koperácie rôznych sociálnych aktivít prostredníctvom Sociálnych klubov*. In: M. L u k á č, B. F r k (ed.). *Chudoba a sociálne vylúčenie ako problém súčasnosti – Výzvy a trendy*. Prešov: OZ-Potenciál 2010 p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> The Plan calls this fact like an "odhaľovaním znakov času, alebo poznávania prítomnej chvíle", "uncovering the signs of the times" or as a "recognition of present time" as the Second Vatican Council said before (cf. GS 44). The Plan notes that „najkľúčovejším momentom tohto poznávania v prítomnej chvíli vzhľadom na pastoračnú činnosť Cirkvi sa ukazuje nekompatibilita medzi základným nastavením pastoračie a realitou, ktorú žijú jej adresáti.“ *Pastoračný plán katolíckej Cirkvi 2007-2013* p. 13. (The most interesting moment of this recognition in the relationship to the pastoral activity of the Church is the incompatibility between the basic settings of pastoral work and a reality of life in which the real people must live.) Cf. M. U h á Ľ. *Morálny imperatív v službe kňaza farára*. In: L. L e š k o v á (ed.). *Osobnosť dobrovoľníka v pomáhajúcej profesii cez prizmu ideového odkazu bl. Sára Salkaházi*. Košice: Viena 2011 pp. 33-47; M. U h á Ľ. *Otázka sociálnej pomoci prostredníctvom dobrovoľníctva v pastoračných aktivitách katolíckej Cirkvi*, In: L. L e š k o v á (ed.). *Dobrovoľníctvo, solidarita a pomoc chudobným*. Košice: Viena 2010 pp. 11-17; M. U h á Ľ. *Otázka dobrovoľníctva v pohľade pastoračného plánu Katolíckej Cirkvi na roky 2007-2013*, In: L. L e š k o v á (ed.). *Dobrovoľníctvo, solidarita a pomoc chudobným* pp. 17-23.

network of Diocesan Social Clubs. But bishops are afraid about the new social structure in the field of the Church and they want to protect their priests from new dimension of work. The question is also the potential need for new money investments.

Did the Church make that work till now?

It is not true if we think that the Church did not do anything in the area of social need of people, and social care and social work. But it was not enough for such situations as they have become after nearly twenty years of freedom in Slovak society. The Slovak Catholic Church also in the years of the socialistic regime has had the structure of the Slovak Catholic Charity, which was the main structure for helping people in Slovakia.<sup>12</sup> This Charity still worked as much as it could. We must remember different social and economic and political situation. The main differences which had the most influence on the charity and social work of the Church were a few things.

1. The Church did not give much social help because she could not do something like that in the past. The socialist state wanted to exclude the church from the social life in the country. The Church was under state control such that its influence on the society was not so strong. The social work was ethically and emotionally strong and socialistic state did not want to let these influences spread to the society. The state stopped all other ways of help except the state help system. After the Revolution the Church, especially the pastoral priests, are still a little passive and under the influence and old habits from the past.

2. Socialist regime offered all social benefits, many social items, to everybody in the Slovakia.<sup>13</sup> And this resulted in the fact that there were not many poor people who needed special help from the church or any other organizations.

3. The socialist system did not allow it to be said that somebody is poor. It was the propaganda about the achievements of the socialist system. The police controlled everybody throughout the day, why one is not at work and why he is walking on the streets, and does not work. The one was controlled as to whether he has the stamps in his identification card or at that time "Identification Booklet", or as we called it "Citizen Document".<sup>14</sup> Who had

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<sup>12</sup> In nowadays Slovakia we still have the same Catholic Charity which is the main structure for helping people in the all of Slovakia. It has smaller parts in every diocese – Diocesan Catholic Charity (10) and mainly all of them have their own legal identity and all of them have their own financial budgets. There are many Parish Charities as the smallest parts of this structure in some parishes. Cf. <http://www.charita.sk>; cf. <http://www.caritas.sk/index.php?Cat=15>

<sup>13</sup> We had free education in all kinds of schools, free health services, free help and assistance for the families, for small children and so on.

<sup>14</sup> At that time this ID card has had many pages and some pages were prepared for re-

no work he was against the regime, because he did not build the „socialist future”.

All things mentioned above had and still have some influence on the whole Slovak Church and her potential seeing the new visions for work. But after the new situation came, which shows the new possibilities in the pastoral work and social care in our parishes, the problem changed its face. As the result of this new situation of the pastoral work is the question for the potential of the pastoral priest<sup>15</sup> in our parishes in Slovakia and on the other hand, the situation for the pastoral work. It is progressive situation which changes very quickly and many priests do not know how to respond. The next question is if the social work is real work for pastoral priests? A priest is and must be a spiritual person and his work must be the same. The third new and progressive condition is that social work in ways as the Pastoral Plan shows it is oriented towards the people without faith and often to the non catholics. The question is: Is it real work for a catholic priest to do social work in his parish for non-catholics? And all these questions are the main issue for new research and study. I will show some of them in the next part of my article.

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gistration in a work company in which this citizen of the Republic had to work. If he had no registration and stamp of some company or enterprise, he was controlled by the police as to why he does not work and judged. This is because he who does not work breaks the socialist system and making poorer the state.

<sup>15</sup> When we use the word or name – “pastoral priest” we must know, that all priests who are ordained for the priesthood received the obligation for serving people and help them live with the right human dignity and to be able to receive God’s kingdom. But when we use the concept of “pastoral priest” we do not want to say that there are some priests who do not need to do any pastoral work. We want to say that we can find some other priests who do not perform “normal” or traditional pastoral care, but they are sent by their bishop to make some other work which does not give them any opportunity to meet people in parishes and help them in their daily problems.

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DZIAŁALNOŚĆ SPOŁECZNA JAKO SPOSÓB WIELOKULTUROWEJ POSŁUGI  
W PARAFII Z PUNKTU WIDZENIA KATOLICKIEJ NAUKI SPOŁECZNEJ  
„UWARUNKOWANIA SPOŁECZNE”

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Po aksamitnej rewolucji i dwudziestu latach wolności słowackiego społeczeństwa Kościół katolicki na Słowacji dostrzega potrzebę odnowy stylu pracy duszpasterskiej. Postanowił przygotować plan duszpasterski na kolejną dekadę, przy czym obecnie obowiązuje już druga wersja powyższego planu. Plan duszpasterski Kościoła katolickiego na Słowacji na lata 2007-2013 zawiera nowe możliwości działania, zwłaszcza w zakresie pracy charytatywno-socjalnej w parafiach. Wyciągnięte zostały wnioski z diagnozy sytuacji społeczno-kulturowej społeczeństwa słowackiego oraz wskazano nowe formy pracy pastoralnej dla niektórych grup struktury społeczeństwa słowackiego. Ten artykuł przedstawia sytuację społeczną, która wymusiła korektę planu duszpasterskiego, oraz pokazuje główne kierunki zmian strategii duszpasterskiej. Zarysowana sytuacja społeczna jest punktem wyjścia do poszukiwania nowych form działalności duszpasterskiej w wielokulturowej społeczności, którą społeczeństwo słowackie *de facto* już się stało.

**Słowa kluczowe:** duszpasterstwo, plan duszpasterski, Kościół, socjalistyczna przeszłość, praca społeczna, działalność charytatywna.