

REV. MICHAŁ KLEMENTOWICZ

THE WORD IS ALWAYS CURRENT:
SYSTEMIZING A HOMILY IN THE CHRISTOCENTRIC KEY

REVIEW ARTICLE FOR THE PUBLICATION
WE PROCLAIM THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.
THE CONTENTS OF PREACHING

Abstract. The correct actualization of the Word of God in a Christocentric way is still a necessary matter that aims to properly explain different elements of the kerygma to recipients. The concept of proper actualization has been systematized in *We Proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. The Contents of Preaching*. The reviewed publication consists of 13 articles, in which the kerygmatic, existential, didactic and moral aspects of preaching have been presented. The listed items are a compendium for correctly revealing the mystery of Jesus in the ministry of proclaiming the Word of God.

Keywords: actualization; Christocentric; liturgy; preaching.

INTRODUCTION

St. Augustine's *Homily 179* clearly states that "to listen to the Word of God is to feed on Christ."¹ This is determined by the itinerary of the correct actualization of the Word of God during the liturgy,² where Christocentrism in preaching is the binding norm. The reference indicated here is important for the liturgy itself, since, as St. Athanasius writes in *De Incarnatione* 54,3: "The Word of God became a man, that man may become God." Thus, the

Rev. Dr. MICHAŁ KLEMENTOWICZ is an adjunct for the Chair of Homiletics at the Institute of Liturgy and Homiletics for the Faculty of Theology at CUL; correspondence address: Al. Racławickie 14, 20-950 Lublin; e-mail: hindenburg@wp.pl

¹ Bogusław NADOLSKI, *Gesty i słowa w Eucharystii* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Salwator, 2009), 48.

² Despite the differences in the phenomena and discussions on the constants, we can only talk about homilies here. This can be confirmed in the *Wskazania Konferencji Episkopatu Polski dotyczące homilii mszalnej*, <http://episkopat.pl/biskupi-homilie-powinny-byc-kazdorazowo-starannie-przygotowywane/> (accessed: 6.03.2018).

homily, as an integral part of the liturgy, seeks to divinize man, so that every recipient might meet the living Christ in the liturgical activities, who answers the vital questions that bother people who listen to the word of God in a spirit of faith.

The mentioned Christocentrism in preaching is therefore the principle of proper homiletic ministry during the liturgy. In this context, the subject of interest in this article is the publication *Głosimy Pana Jezusa Chrystusa. Treść przepowiadania* (We Proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. The Contents of Preaching, hereinafter abbreviated: *PLJCCP*), published by Fr. Henryk Sławiński as the editor in Krakow in 2017 as the fourth volume of the “Ancilla Verbi” series. It was financed by a subsidy for maintaining the research and development potential of the John Paul II Pontifical University in Krakow awarded by the Minister of Science and Higher Education in 2015. The position is a scholarly, peer-reviewed work, available both in print³ and online on the Internet (DOI: 10.15633/9788374385329). The primary reason for this reflection is the current subject matter that was made in the analyzed publication. It fits in with the quoted KEP norms regarding a homily, and in addition it is also an important solution to the issues formulated in the *Homiletic Directory*.⁴

The goal of this study is to evaluate the academic contents and to look at the formal side of the *PLJCCP* publication. The article also seeks to place academically similar publications (according to their subject matter) in the field of monographs and other research publications. The analysis of all the phenomena mentioned here will allow us to create an assessment of the collected work, which is the *PLJCCP*.

The *PLJCCP* consists of thirteen chapters, which are articles prepared by twelve authors. In the first one entitled *Przepowiadanie chrystocentryczne* (Christocentric Proclamation, *PLJCCP*, pp. 11–29), Fr. Henryk Sławiński self-defines homiletics as an academic reflection on preaching the mystery of Jesus Christ. In this context, Fr. H. Sławiński mainly presents the theological understanding of Christocentrism in preaching the word, precisely stating that it is “a concentration of theological issues on God appearing in Jesus Christ” (*PLJCCP*, p. 16). An important element in the presentation is also looking at the mystery of Christ in preaching, which cannot become a depreciation of the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

³ *Głosimy Pana Jezusa Chrystusa. Treść przepowiadania*, ed. Henryk Sławiński, (series: Ancilla Verbi IV) (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UPJPII, 2017).

⁴ KONGREGACJA DS. KULTU BOŻEGO I DYSCYPLINY SAKRAMENTÓW, *Dyrektorium homiletyczne* (Poznań: Pallottinum, 2015).

The second chapter, entitled *Głoszenie orędzia Starego Testamentu. Refleksje homiletyczne* (Proclaiming the Old Testament Message. Homiletical Reflections, *PLJCCP*, pp. 31–65), is an article divided into five broad points written by Fr. Jan Twarcz. In the first point, the author presents the state of homiletical research in the area of using the contents of the Old Testament in preaching. The second point refers to the Church's documents regarding preaching the Old Testament's contents. The third point, entitled "The Salvation History Contents of the Old Testament," is the key idea about the principle of the unity of both Testaments. According to this concept, all the central faith topic announced in the Old Covenant are fulfilled in the person of Christ. The fourth point entitled "Uniting Old Testament Texts with New Testament Texts" has been constructed according to the four models of the Interpretation of the New Testament in relation to the Old Covenant. In addition to these models, the author also proposed three types of harmonizations, thanks to which the lectionary texts can be harmonized. The last point summarizes all of the concepts presented in the study.

The third text included in the publication is the article by Fr. Witold Ostafiński titled *Orędzie głoszone przez Jezusa Chrystusa* (The Message Proclaimed by Jesus Christ, *PLJCCP*, pp. 67–86). The author presents the manner, content, purpose and method of proclaiming the mysteries of Jesus Christ, which are actualized in the liturgical ministry of the Word.

The author of the next article, entitled *Głoszenie Chrystusa i jego recepcja w starożytności i dziś w aspekcie przepowiadanej treści* (Proclaiming Christ and its Reception in Antiquity and Today in the Aspect of Preached Contents, *PLJCCP*, pp. 87–118), is the acclaimed patrologist Arakadiusz Baron SJ, who presents the concept of a patristic view of the issue of Christocentrism in preaching, accentuating the fundamental contents related to Christological doctrine in antiquity. This is also a compendium of contents, so to speak, of the classical works of such authors as Augustyn Jankowski, Jean Daniélou and Franciszek Szulc, who in their publications dealt with ancient Judeo-Christian Christology (*PLJCCP*, pp. 92–93). A. Baron also presents ways of proclaiming Christ in the perspective of the civilizational differences of the Mediterranean basin with particular reference to the Semitic culture and the Greek and Latin mentalities.

Misterium Chrystusa, kerygmat i dogmat w przepowiadaniu (The Mystery of Christ, Kerygma and Dogma in Preaching, *PLJCCP*, pp. 119–146) is another text by Fr. Henryk Sławiński, the next article of the publication being reviewed. It is divided into five points. After the introduction, Fr. H. Sławiński discusses issues related to understanding the term "mystery," then in the

next two points he explains the etymology and meaning of the terms “kerygma” and “dogma.” In the last, fifth point, he describes the importance of kerygma and dogma in proclaiming Christ's mystery. The analysis of the relationship between the terms “kerygma” and “dogma” was presented by the author based on the example of the presence of both forms within the framework of various examples of the ministry of the Word (*PLJCCP*, pp. 134–136). The author of the study also defined the role of dogma in the ministry of preaching the Word, emphasizing its positive and critical role in preaching.

The next chapter of the analyzed publication develops the issue of Christocentrism in preaching and the ministry of the Word throughout the entire liturgical year. Fr. Stanisław Dyk, the author of the article entitled *Głoszenie Chrystusa w roku liturgicznym* (Proclaiming Christ in the Liturgical Year, *PLJCCP*, pp. 147–171), first of all draws attention to the character of the liturgical year, which makes the entire mystery of Christ present. A special place is given to the Paschal events. Starting from the stated premises, the author articulates an important recommendation: “A homilist should know, therefore, that the liturgical year is not a collection of particular liturgical periods, but an entire whole centered on Easter” (*PLJCCP*, p. 152). An important element of the study by Fr. S. Dyk draws attention to the spiritual dimension of the message of the liturgical year. His goal is to lead the faithful to maturity in faith and to “live one’s life in connection with the saving mystery of Christ” (*PLJCCP*, p. 155). The recapitulation of the article’s idea is the author’s formulation of three specific perspectives for preaching during the liturgical year. Fr. S. Dyk introduced the so-called Christological-paschal perspective, which allows the preacher to preserve the unity between the proclamation and the structure of the Gospel. The second perspective has an “organic and pedagogical character.” In this dimension, the individual mysteries of Christ throughout the liturgical year are shown in a characteristic pastoral sense. This allows not only for the proper harmonization of the lectionary’s readings, but also to actualize the history of salvation, which has found its fullness in the mystery of Christ. The third field presented by Fr. S. Dyk is the “mystagogical dimension.” Respecting mystagogy in preaching is to allow for meeting Christ in a homily and at the same time to provide an opportunity to give him our reply, for example, through liturgical attitudes.

The seventh chapter is an article entitled *Chrystocentryczne głoszenie zasad życia chrześcijańskiego* (Christocentric Proclamation of the Principles of Christian Life, *PLJCCP*, pp. 173–196) by Fr. Leszek Szewczyk. The

introduction to this part of the publication describes Fr. L. Szewczyk's principles of Christocentrism in preaching the Word of God. The second part of this chapter is devoted to the necessity of proclaiming the principles of the Christian life, which are presented by the homilist as a unique result of the faith professed. In the third point, the author showed the biblical basis for preaching parenetic contents. Regarding both the New and the Old Testaments, the author emphasized that the moral imperative emerging in the biblical message is always preceded by a salvific indicative, meaning the revelation of God's saving action (*PLJCCP*, pp. 181–182). Referring to the contents of the moral principles proclaimed (the next point of this chapter), Fr. L. Szewczyk devoted it to the substantive issues that should be found in the ministry of the Word. In this respect, the author pointed out that the homilist should concentrate on one fundamental issue, which should necessarily result from the preached kerygma.

The next element of this chapter is the author's need to justify in various ways the proclaimed parenthetical issues. This is connected with the diverse level of the recipients of the Word of God. When discussing the issue concerning the place of moral principles in the ministry of the Word and referring to the existential and dialogical model popular in preaching, Fr. L. Szewczyk defines the place in which the moral imperative is formulated. In the next part of this chapter, the author mentions the remaining formal aspects that should be found in bringing closer the moral message. He particularly emphasizes reference to the level of argumentation on the broadest rhetorical potential offered by referring to man's intellectual, volitional and affective levels. In the last part of the chapter, in defining the most important errors in the proclamation of kerygmatic truths, the author emphasized the role that *lectio divina* can play in the process of preparing a homiletic parenthesis.

The eighth chapter of the publication is an article entitled *Chrystocentryzm eklezjalny w przepowiadaniu słowa Bożego* (Ecclesiastical Christocentrism in the Preaching of the Word of God, *PLJCCP*, pp. 197–220) by Fr. Sławomir Płusa. Starting from the relationship between Christ and the Church, the author first of all emphasizes the existence of the Church, which, being a kind of sacrament, is a sign of the unification of people with God in Christ. In this dimension, the author showed the relationship between the Church community and its Bridegroom, Christ. In practice, therefore, according to the concept presented by the author, ecclesiastical Christocentrism means "an invitation to accept the love [of Christ] and to respond to it" (*PLJCCP*, p. 203). In addition, Fr. S. Płusa also points out that Christocentrism in the Homiletic ministry is based on the work of the Son of God, who ceased to

exist for himself, but instead lived for others. The principle of the pro-existence of Christ defined in this way becomes a commitment to the Church community. The author also formulates an important implication for preaching, claiming that kerygmatic actualization should have a strong kerygmatic accent, which allows deepening the listener's bond with Christ, thus giving birth to faith.

In addition to the mentioned references, Fr. S. Plusa associates ecclesiastical Christocentrism with a specific mode of communication. The model for the author is the road taken by the disciples going to Emmaus and meet Christ on the way. The author also points out that ecclesiastical Christocentrism is connected with the Church's principle of building relationships. Thanks to this, the institutional element is overcome in order to promote human dignity in the community, especially in the dimension of socially excluded people.

Głosimy Chrystusa, który jest i który przychodzi (We proclaim Christ Who Is and Who Comes, *PLJCCP*, pp. 221–235) is the title of the ninth chapter of the analyzed publication. The text by Fr. Edward Wasilewski is an attempt to undertake a Christocentric approach to eschatological truths. The author not only presented the basic eschatological issues in terms of the catechism, but he also tried to show the principles of their correct approximation in a homily. The author, however, made an important reservation, stressing that the mere presentation of truths in the field of eschatology cannot be considered a sufficient criterion. The purpose of actualizing a homily is to present it in the context of the life of the listeners, which should try to obtain a specific spiritual benefit for the recipients.

In the tenth chapter, entitled *Chrystocentryzm maryjny w przepowiadaniu* (Marian Christocentrism in Preaching, *PLJCCP*, pp. 237–235), Fr. Tadeusz Lewandowski presented this issue in preaching a homily, which in practice is often characterized by a lack of focus on the work of Jesus Christ. The author first of all showed Mary as being present in the work of salvation history. Next, he stressed how to present Mary in the so-called idea of correlating with the work of Redemption. He also pointed out how Mary can be portrayed as related to the mystery of the Church. These indications will allow, according to the author's intention, keeping Christocentrism when preaching about Mary.

The next, eleventh chapter, titled *Chrystocentryczne przepowiadanie hagiograficzne* (Christ-centered Hagiographic Preaching, *PLJCCP*, pp. 261–280), was devoted to presenting the mystery of Christ in the face of the challenge of preaching about the saints. Fr. Kazimierz Panuś, the author of

this section, tries above all to show holiness as a form or measure of human life. Then, after showing that the norm of life is holiness, he went on to speak of issues concerning the person of Jesus Christ, “the crown of all saints.” A recapitulation is the evaluation of hagiographic preaching, ending with the formulation of imperatives regarding the correct form of such preaching in the liturgy.

The content of the twelfth, penultimate chapter of this monograph is the article *Chrystocentryczna interpretacja ludzkiego życia w przepowiadaniu* (A Christ-centered Interpretation of Man’s Life in Preaching, *PLJCCP*, pp. 281–294) by Fr. Adam Kalbarbar. As a criterion for correct preaching (actualization), the author gives us an appropriate “knowledge about the life” of the recipient. At the same time, the element of anthropological renovation must be synchronized with “getting to know the mystery of Christ and the mystery of man contained in it and his life in the world” (*PLJCCP*, p. 289). It is not, however, as A. Kalbarczyk emphasized here, perceiving its cause and effect dimension, where man is able to identify his life history. Rather, it is a holistic approach to who man is and accepting that the answer to this question is only possible in the perception of the mystery of Christ.

In the last chapter, the text entitled *Chrystocentryczna interpretacja ludzkiej kultury* (The Christocentric Interpretation of Human Culture, *PLJCCP*, pp. 295–308), Fr. Andrzej Draguła analyzes culture, whose element continues to be the Christian religion, where the “paradigm of the Incarnation” takes place. In this context, Fr. A. Draguła develops the idea that human culture must be built precisely on the dimension of the Incarnation, which protects humanity from the error of anthropocentrism in culture. The indicated relationship between culture and religion is, according to many researchers, always possible, despite the existing discrepancies (the author makes a detailed account of this in the content of the whole presentation).

The substantially analyzed texts of the individual chapters (articles) of the *PLJCCP* definitely have an academic style. Numerous concepts appear in them found in theological discourse. In addition, the exactness and precision for these types of texts in articulating specific issues is evident, as well as the objectivity of the presented contents. Semantically, the texts are constructed as correctly as possible. The thematic and rematic structure of the whole book is marked by successive chapters whose layout is very logical: after presenting the biblical issues, including those related to the kerygma of preaching, issues related to existentially introducing the kerygma into the life of recipients are presented. Such a system reveals a certain tendency which appears in publications from the scope of the content of preaching in

recent times. A similar semantic concept can be seen even in the publication by Fr. Stanisław Dyk, *The Homily Is the Way to Get to Know the Living Mystery of Christ*,⁵ and the collective work edited by Michał Dąbrówki and Fr. Michał Klementowicz entitled *The Integral Homily. A Study of the Contents of Homiletic Preaching*.⁶

Despite the undeniable merits of the *PLJCCP*, it cannot be considered an innovative publication. It is part of a series of publications in the field of material homiletics, which have recently appeared. In addition to the above-mentioned two books, it is worth drawing attention to the publication by Fr. S. Dyk: *Co głosić, aby wierzyli? Studium homiletyczne lekcjonarza mszalnego* (What Should We Preach for them to Believe? A Homiletic Study of the Mass Lectionary).⁷ All mentioned publications undertake the fundamental issue in the *PLJCCP* in various ways, meaning the range of Christocentric proclamation of God's Word. The analysed publication is rather a form of organizing certain meanings in the field of the preaching ministry. It is a puzzling fact, however, that there is no wider appeal in individual articles to refer to a book such as *What Should We Preach for them to Believe?* In this book, Fr. S. Dyk not only sacrificed the whole passus to the issue of Christocentrism,⁸ but also discussed this issue in the dimension of the individual mysteries of Jesus' life revealed in the texts harmonized in the lectionary, which seems to be crucial for the concept developed in *PLJCCP*.

The monograph *PLJCCP* is an attempt to systematize the principles of proclaiming the Word in the Christ-centric key. The advantage of the publication is its online availability. This enables an easier perception of a number of important issues undertaken by individual authors. All articles (constituting separate chapters of the book) also present interesting intertextuality. This is a result of the bibliography presented at the end of each

⁵ Kielce: Wydawnictwo "Jedność," 2016. In the first chapter, the author writes about "searching for Christ" (meaning extracting the Kerygma, pp. 27–89), in the second chapter, it is "looking at Christ" (experiencing the kerygma in the liturgical celebration, pp. 91–135), and the third chapter is about "presenting Christ in human life" (pp. 137–194).

⁶ Tarnów: Biblos, 2017. The order of the contents is compatible with the current concept in the *PLJCCP*, meaning that the chapter speaks about extracting the Kerygma (pp. 21–47), the second chapter is about highlighting the Kerygma in man's life (pp. 49–73), the third chapter is about better understanding the Kerygma (in the perspective of concrete recipients, pp. 75–104), the IV chapter is a parenthesis (addressed again to concrete listeners, pp. 105–130), and the V chapter is about experiencing the mystery of the liturgy (pp. 131–170).

⁷ Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2013.

⁸ Ibidem, 32–36.

article, which allows us to broaden our knowledge in the perspective of issues presented in the publication.

Efficient familiarization with the contents of the publication is facilitated by abstracts in Polish and English, as well as lists of keywords after each of the articles. One drawback, however, is the lack of a subject index, which would not only show the unity of the subject matter being undertaken in the publication, but would also make it easier to use the book in the context of particular issues, such as: Christocentrism, the mystery of Christ, preaching the message of Jesus throughout the liturgical year, etc. These issues, after all, are the common denominator of the reflections undertaken in several chapters of the publication under analysis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- DYK, Stanisław. *Co głosić, aby wierzyli? Studium homiletyczne lekcjonarza mszalnego* [What Should We Preach for them to Believe? A Homiletic Study of the Mass Lectionary]. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2013.
- DYK, Stanisław. *Homilia Droga do żywego poznania misterium Chrystusa* [The Homily Is the Way to Get to Know the Living Mystery of Christ]. Kielce: Wydawnictwo „Jedność,” 2016.
- Głosimy Pana Jezusa Chrystusa. Treść przepowiadania* [We Proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ. The Contents of Preaching], edited by Henryk Sławiński, (series: Ancilla Verbi IV). Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UPJPII, 2017.
- Homilia integralna. Studium treści przepowiadania homilijnego* [The Integral Homily. A Study of the Contents of Homiletic Preaching], edited by Michał Dąbrówka, Michał Klementowicz. Tarnów: Biblos, 2017.
- KONFERENCJA EPISKOPATU POLSKI. *Wskazania dotyczące homilii mszalnej* [Poland's Conference of Catholic Bishops: Indications for Mass Homilies], <http://episkopat.pl/biskupi-homilie-powinny-byc-kazdorazowo-starannieprzygotowywane/> (accessed: 6.03.2018).
- NADOLSKI, Bogusław. *Gesty i słowa w Eucharystii* [Gestures and Words in the Eucharist]. Kraków: Salwator, 2009.

Translated by Jan Kobyłecki



The preparation of the English version of *Roczniki Teologiczne (Annals of Theology)* and its publication in electronic databases was financed under contract no. 836/P-DUN/2018 from the resources of the Minister of Science and Higher Education for the popularization of science.