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INTERPRETATION OF THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LITURGY ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT, CYCLE A

Abstract. The guiding principle that should accompany a homilist's interpretation of biblical texts in the liturgy is fidelity to the Bible and the Church, which has the mission of guarding and explaining the Word of God. This means that a homilist must use proven tools, including biblical hermeneutics. In the case of homiletical preaching, which takes place during a liturgical event, it is also a matter of taking into account that "the liturgical setting is an essential key to interpreting the biblical passages proclaimed in a celebration" (Homiletic Directory, no. 15). This article presents how to interpret the Word of God in the liturgy based on the example of the Fifth Sunday of Lent, cycle A. Taking into account hermeneutical principles makes it possible to emphasize the kerymatic meaning of the Mass readings every Sunday.

Keywords: The Word of God; liturgy; Lectionary; homily; preaching.

INTRODUCTION

The guiding principle that should accompany a homilist's interpretation of biblical texts in the liturgy is fidelity to the Bible and the Church, which has the mission of guarding and explaining the word of God (cf. DV 12). The case of homiletical preaching that takes place during a liturgical event also takes into account that "the liturgical setting is an essential key to interpreting the biblical passages proclaimed in a celebration."¹ This context consists of euchological texts, signs, symbols and liturgical rites, the mystery celebrated, as well as the given liturgical cycle or period. The homilist should be familiar with the method of working with these sources, since his

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¹ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Homiletic Directory* (henceforth: HD), 15.

task is to accurately harmonize and interpret them, ending with an appropriate synthesis. Without the latter, it seems difficult to clarify the theme and message of a given celebration. The homilist should remember that the more concrete he makes the salvific message in the homily, the more aptly he relates it to the life of the listener. Neglecting this principle makes preaching generic and superficial. Moreover, ignorance of hermeneutic principles can result in focusing on secondary themes, without reference to the main message of the celebration. Hence, it seems essential to know the methods of interpreting the Word of God in the liturgy. Given the above, this article will deal first with the methodology of using homiletic sources in preparation for the preaching office. Next, it will demonstrate the practical application of this method using the example of the Fifth Sunday of Lent.

1. INTERPRETATION OF THE WORD OF GOD IN THE LITURGY – METHODOLOGY FOR HOMILY PREPARATION

First and foremost, the essential “component” of this context is the Lectionary itself – the liturgical book in which the biblical texts have been placed and harmonized with one another. Stanisław Dyk notes that this new context also determines how biblical texts are read. It does not impoverish the biblical pericopes but sets them in a framework that emphasizes one or two elements taken from the multifaceted content richness of these texts.² The method for working with the Lectionary has been developed and presented in detail by S. Dyk.³

On Sundays of particularly significant periods (of which Lent is one), all the readings are harmonized with one another in terms of content.⁴ Interpreting the Lectionary begins with an examination of the Gospel pericope, given that it is the most important reading in the liturgy of the Word of God.⁵ The

² Stanisław Dyk, *Co głosić, aby wierzyli? Studium homiletyczne Lekcjonarza mszalnego* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2013), 11; Edward Foley, “The Homily,” in *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching*, ed. Edward Foley (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2016), 162-163; Dianne Bergant, “Biblical Preaching,” in *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching*, ed. Edward Foley (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2016), 119-120.

³ Stanisław Dyk, *Homilia – droga do żywego poznania misterium Chrystusa* (Kielce: Jedność, 2016); Dyk, *Co głosić, aby wierzyli?* 27-66; Stanisław Dyk, „Hermeneutyka słowa Bożego w liturgii,” *Studia Pastoralne* 7 (2011): 148-165.

⁴ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *General Introduction to the Lectionary – Second Edition* (henceforth: GIL), 67.

⁵ GIL 13.

next stage will be an exegetical analysis of the First Reading. It should be noted that the Old Testament texts have been chosen in such a way as to show their relationship with the Gospel pericope. Hence, attention should be paid to their mutual correlations. As S. Dyk points out, the First Reading provides an introduction, context and further insight into the Gospel.⁶ The next step in working with the Lectionary will be to analyze the Responsorial Psalm, which is most often a prayerful commentary on the First Reading. As the Homiletic Directory points out, psalms are not to be underestimated, for “they demonstrate how the Church reads all Scripture in the light of Christ.”⁷ The interpretation of the Second Reading will be the next stage of study. On Sundays of Lent, the readings from the Apostle are chosen to harmonize with the readings from the Gospel and the Old Testament and, as far as possible, to emphasize the interconnection between them. The interpretation of these readings will also help to show the theological dimension of the mystery to be celebrated and the way in which it is to be realised in people’s lives.⁸ In discussing the method to be used in interpreting the texts of the Lectionary, two important principles must also be mentioned: the Christological and paschal interpretations. These are particularly important when it comes to explaining Scripture in liturgical celebrations. Taking into account the above hermeneutic principles will make it possible to emphasize the kerygmatic meaning of the Mass readings of the analyzed Sunday.

The above “scheme” for analyzing the texts of the Lectionary does not yet exhaust all the work with the sacred texts. Further on, it is necessary to interpret the kerygma of the Mass readings in light of the liturgical celebration. The liturgy is an important context for the correct reading of the Word of God; it is the “house of Scripture.” In the next step, the analysis of the euchological text will be conducted. These texts were created based on the biblical ones – they constitute a living and authentic exegesis of the Word of God.⁹

Moreover, in interpreting the Word of God in the liturgy, a homilist should take into account the theology of the liturgical period in which the texts appear. In the case of the Sundays of Lent, cycle A, the focus will be on their baptismal character. As the Homiletic Directory notes, “by means of these biblical passages and the prayers of the liturgy, the Church is leading

⁶ Dyk, *Co głosić, aby wierzyli?* 49.

⁷ HD 50.

⁸ GIL 97; Stanisław Dyk, *Współczesne przepowiadanie homilijne misteriów publicznego życia Jezusa* (Lublin: KUL, 2008), 152.

⁹ Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 52.

her elect toward sacramental initiation at Easter.”¹⁰ Therefore, it is to be a special time for all the baptised, “a time for the reactivation of the graces of Baptism and a purification of the faith that had been received.”¹¹ The final part of this article will present the kerygma of the Fifth Sunday of Lent of cycle A from a baptismal perspective. The goal is to indicate the main themes of the celebration, which then, deepened by the homilist, will not only help the faithful to remember Baptism, but contribute to its revival and renewal.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE READINGS OF THE LECTIONARY FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

The following biblical texts are harmonized in the Lectionary for the Fifth Sunday of Lent, cycle A: Ezek 37:12-14; Ps 130(129):1-2.3-4.5-7a.7bc-8 (R.: cf. 7); Rom 8:8-11; John 11:1-45.

2.1 Gospel pericope – text characteristics and analysis

Verses 1-6 function as an introduction, providing information about the place, time, people, and main theme of the story. The sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany send Jesus’ news of their brother Lazarus’ sickness. The siblings have a close friendship bond with Jesus, and Jesus loves them (*agapao*). The name Lazarus is related to the name Eleazar (Greek: *Eleazaros*) and means “God helped.” Lazarus lived in Bethany, a town on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, located about three kilometers from Jerusalem. From the biblical context, information about Lazarus’ sickness comes to Jesus while he is in Transjordan. However, Jesus does not make an immediate decision to go see him. He announces that Lazarus’ sickness will not end in death, but is intended to reveal the glory of God and glorify the Son of Man (cf. John 11:4). With these words, he signals that a miraculous sign will take place in Bethany.¹²

¹⁰ HD 69.

¹¹ HD 69.

¹² Silvano Fausti, *Rozważaj i głos Ewangelię. Wspólnota czyta Ewangelię wg św. Jana* (Kraków: Bratni Zew, 2009), 317-318; Innocenzo Gargano, *Lectio divina do Ewangelii św. Jana (2)* (Kraków: Dehon, 2001), 73; Stanisław Mędała, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 1-12* (Częstochowa: Edycja św. Pawła, 2010), 796-798; Francis Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 325.

After Jesus' arrival in Bethany, the evangelist depicts Jesus' meeting with Martha (cf. John 11:17-27). Even though Lazarus has already been lying in the tomb for four days, Martha carries deep hope in her heart. She believes that Jesus has the power to reverse her brother's death. Before Jesus intervenes, he first assures Martha that Lazarus will rise again. By this he means not just a universal resurrection on the last day, as Martha thought. He explains that he is the Resurrection and the Life, and that whoever believes in him, even if he dies, will live. Jesus is the Resurrection because he gives to those who believe in him God's life that cannot be destroyed by biological death. It is about eternal life – not just in the sense of life without end. It is about life in its fullness, an existence qualitatively beyond human possibility. In addition to revealing himself, Jesus demands an act of faith from Martha: "Do you believe this?" The dialogue ends with the confession of faith in the messiahship of Jesus and his eschatological mission.¹³

The next scene is Jesus' meeting with Mary, accompanied by the Jews consoling her (cf. John 11:28-37). Their presence here is not accidental. The witnesses of the miracle of the resurrection will show two opposing reactions: faith leading to conversion and unbelief leading to hostility. The evangelist John, speaking of Mary getting up quickly and going to Jesus, uses verbs (*egeiro*, *anistemi*) that describe resurrection. Mary, by going to Jesus, is awakened to new life. In Jesus' question: "Where have you laid him" (John 11:33), the question addressed by the Creator to Adam returns like an echo: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). God seeks man everywhere – from Eden to the grave.¹⁴

Lazarus' tomb was a cavern with a stone resting on it. The description of Lazarus' sepulcher resembles the description of another tomb – the one in which Jesus' body was laid (cf. John 20:1). When Jesus came, Lazarus had already been lying in the tomb for four days (v. 39). For the Jews, the sign of death was the decomposition of the body, which took place just four days after death. The sign made in Bethany is to be clear and indisputable – Jesus will indeed raise a dead man from the grave. This evident sign of victory over death is to illustrate the guarantee of a future resurrection. At the moment of the resurrection, Jesus makes a personal call to Lazarus to come out.

¹³ Kazimierz Romaniuk, Augustyn Jankowski and Lech Stachowiak, *Praktyczny komentarz do Nowego Testamentu* (Poznań–Kraków: Pallotinum, 1999), 507; Mędała, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 1-12*, 805.

¹⁴ Mędała, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana*, 806-808.

His place is not in the tomb, but outside of it – by Jesus. Addressing the dead man shows Jesus' authority and his total power over death.¹⁵

In the miraculous sign at Bethany, Jesus reveals himself as more powerful than death. He is the “life and resurrection.” Of course, raising Lazarus from the dead is essentially different from Christ’s resurrection. Rising from the dead is a kind of “resuscitation of the corpse.” The person resurrected eventually had to experience physical death again. The resurrection of Christ is different: He, “raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him” (Rom 6:9). The Risen One has entered God's world and become the source of the transformation experienced by everyone who is united with Him.

2.2 The meaning of the Gospel in the context of the other readings in the Lectionary

The first reading (Ez 37:12-14) consists of the last three verses of one of the most famous passages in the Book of Ezekiel – the vision of the rebirth of a nation. Here the prophet expresses hope for the future rebirth of Israel, for the people are experiencing hopelessness because of the exile in Babylonia. The grave (*qeber*) symbolizes the state of death in which the exiles find themselves. It is a metaphor for abiding in darkness, a symbol of separation from true life. It is important to note that the Babylonian captivity was viewed as a severe punishment for the sins of the chosen people. Babylonia is the “land of sin,” and to be in it is to be aware of being in bondage to sin – in the grave of sin. Scattered and hopeless, Israel is unable to rise up on its own strength. It is Yahweh himself who will perform the miracle: he will open the graves, bring his people out of them and lead them to their land.¹⁶

The reading from the Book of Ezekiel has many elements in common with the Gospel of the day: both Israel and Lazarus are in the grave, Israel’s and Lazarus' graves are opened, Israel and Lazarus are brought out of the grave, the miracle of Israel's “resurrection” is performed by Yahweh and that of Lazarus by Jesus, Israelites can return to their land and Lazarus can walk. Both readings focus on God (Jesus Christ) who is the source of life and who has power over death. Enduring Babylonian captivity was a consequence of Israel's unfaithfulness and distance from Yahweh. There, the nation experi-

¹⁵ Mędala, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana*, 810; Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 333.

¹⁶ Ryszard Rumianek, *Księga Ezechiela. Tłumaczenie i komentarz* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW, 2009), 307.

enced hopelessness and an existential “grave.” Those who move away from Jesus and do not believe in him also experience spiritual emptiness and the grave. It is faith in Jesus that makes it possible for a person to be internally “resurrected”: “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live” (John 11:25a.26). He is the giver of eternal life, life in its fullness, which not even the cave of the grave can destroy. The first reading also introduces the theme of the Spirit of Yahweh who will bring life to Israel. This is a foreshadowing of the Holy Spirit who brings life to believers in Jesus and brings them from death to life.

Psalm 130 is an example of a prayer of supplication. The song may have been a sort of Confiteor that prepared believers for prayer in the Jerusalem temple. The first two verses depict the difficult situation in which the psalmist finds himself. He calls God out of the depths (*mimma'amaqqim*). This expression means the depths of the sea (cf. Ps 69:2; Is 51:10; Ez 27:34) and is a metaphor for a great calamity, an abyss. From the context of the entire psalm, it is clear that this refers to the darkness that is a consequence of sin. The psalmist earnestly asks God to hear him (v. 2). The rest of the psalm is characterized by great confidence in God. The psalmist is convinced that if God had remembered (*tismar* – “kept account of,” “reckoned,” “kept in mind”) sin, none of mankind could have survived. The psalmist, therefore, despite the darkness of sin, does not fall into despair and hopelessness. He is inwardly convinced that with God there is forgiveness. His soul awaits the Lord who is full of grace and redemption. He waits for the saving word of Yahweh – the word of reconciliation.¹⁷

The above analysis of the psalm allows us to notice its close connection with the meaning of the First Reading. In the passage from the Book of Ezekiel, Israel's situation is defined by the “grave.” It is a state of bondage and a consequence of sin, a metaphor of hopelessness and darkness. In contrast, the psalmist describes his situation as “the depths.” It is a similar image – a murky abyss, darkness without dawn, and death as a consequence of sin. While the psalm expresses the psalmist's hope for deliverance, in the First Reading, that deliverance has already come. God sends Israel the word of salvation (forgiveness, reconciliation) that was the psalmist's desire. In the context of the Responsorial Psalm, one should look at the “bringing Israel out of the tombs” as redemption, liberation from the bondage of sin, the forgiveness of guilt, and a demonstration of grace. It is worth noting that in the

¹⁷ Stanisław Łach, *Księga Psalmów. Wstęp – Przekład z oryginału – Komentarz – Ekskursy* (Poznań: Pallotinum, 1990), 533-534.

Liturgy of the Hours, the biblical quotation that defines the Christological meaning of the psalm is “Jesus will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21). The psalmist's cry is thus fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the one who saves from sins: “There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved” (Acts 4:12). With him is plenteous redemption. Jesus Christ leads out of the “depths” and the “grave” of death, directing his saving word: “Come out.” Of course, this is not just about overcoming biological death. In the context of the first reading, the psalm and the Gospel of the day, it is more about spiritual death. Spiritual death is the consequence of sin, from which man cannot free himself by his own efforts. Jesus not only frees from this darkness, but gives much more – eternal life. The common element of the Responsorial Psalm and the Gospel pericope is also the theme of faith. Faith is necessary in order to accept Jesus’ gift of new life. It is pushing away the stone, so that the “fragrance of the oil” of life may overcome the “stench” of death.

The essential theme of the second reading (Rom 8:8-11) is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers. The Spirit is the fullness of life that God offers to man; it is the Spirit of Christ. Paul explains the nature of this life-giving work of the Holy Spirit. First, it is about justification – the fruit of the Paschal Mystery. By the power of Christ’s death and resurrection, man is freed from the bondage of death. Second, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer has the strength to “live by the Spirit.” In this way he preserves God’s life within him. Paul contrasts this with “living according to the flesh.” He is not referring to the Platonic dualism of body and soul. It is more about the contrast between the divine and the non-divine, between living by faith and living without faith, between following Christ and not following him. Third, the “resurrection” by the Spirit also refers to the future resurrection of the body.

The theological meaning of the second reading summarizes the spiritual meaning of all the readings this Sunday. Mankind was immersed in the “deep” and the “grave” – in sin resulting in death. Jesus Christ has conquered death. In doing so, he brought mankind out of the grave’s darkness, giving them the gift of justification. The sign of his victory over death and the reign of life is the resurrection of Lazarus. Through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, man has “eternal life.” This is God’s life that cannot be destroyed by the temporal death of the body. Jesus Christ is the life and resurrection, and everyone who believes in him will live forever. In this perspec-

tive, biological death is not the end, but a transition to full union with God. The believer united to Christ is resurrected, bears his life, and has his Spirit. He is called to preserve this life, “living by the Spirit.” By the power of the Holy Spirit, he can overcome sin – “living according to the flesh.” The Holy Spirit resurrects, revives, leads out of the “death cave” and “enables one to walk,” that is, to live by the Spirit. Even if someone stinks as a result of his sins because he has become spiritually dead, the One who is the Resurrection and Life comes to bring him out of the grave, as he once did to Lazarus, to free him from mortal bonds and give power to dead works.

2.3 Paschal interpretation of the texts of the Lectionary

The resurrection of Lazarus is an obvious sign of Christ’s victory over death. The Homiletic Directory notes: “The heart of the Paschal Mystery is that Christ came to die and rise again precisely to do for us what he did for Lazarus: Untie him and let him go.” On the cross, Jesus is the Lamb of God, who “by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” (Heb 2:9). He reconciled mankind to the Father by his death (cf. Rom 5:10) and saved man from eternal death. When he descended into Limbo, he brought out the dead held in the bonds of death (cf. 1 Peter 3:19n; see Matthew 27:52n).

John’s narrative of raising Lazarus back to life is a foreshadowing and sign of Christ’s victory over death in the Mystery of Death and Resurrection. This is indicated not only by the theological meaning of this pericope. The text itself has numerous allusions and references to the Passover of Christ, among others: the proximity of the Paschal feasts, the intensified persecution of Christ leading to his death, the description of the tomb resembling the tomb of Jesus, the bands and the cloth of Lazarus resembling those that were on the body of the buried Jesus and were left by the Risen One in the tomb. The resurrection of Lazarus directs our attention to the One who is the “life and resurrection,” who has defeated death. To free Lazarus from the tomb, Jesus risks being condemned to death. He has indeed experienced death for all people, including Lazarus. Jesus’ behavior toward Lazarus’ death is contrasted with the behavior of the people toward Jesus on the cross. Jesus cries out for Lazarus to be restored to life (cf. John 11:43). The crowd cries out for Jesus to be put to death (cf. 19:6.15). Jesus Christ took upon Himself Lazarus’ illness, the sickness of all mankind’s sin that led to death – “He died for the people.” The following words apply to Jesus on the cross, burdened with the darkness of the sin of all mankind: “Out of the depths I call

to you, Lord; Lord, hear my cry! May your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy” (Responsorial Psalm). In the mystery of death, Jesus experienced the “depths” – the abyss, the cruel darkness of sin.

Lazarus’ sickness was “not to end in death” because Christ’s Passover is the saving cure for the deadly disease of sin. Jesus Christ brings justification, new life (Second Reading). Jesus, who also laid in the tomb, went where Lazarus was. In doing so, he transformed the “stench” of death into the “fragrant oil” of new life. He went to the tomb to bring humanity its much desired freedom (First Reading). The reference point for the loud cry to Lazarus is the cry of Jesus on the cross. It was there that the final battle with death was fought. In the Mystery of the Resurrection, Christ rolled back the stone, large though it was (cf. Mark 16:4).

The resurrection of Lazarus, bringing him back to life, is a picture of the “resurrection” of humanity to eternal life. It is the selfless gift of the Risen Lord. Jesus loved (*agapao*) Lazarus with sacrificial love all the way to the cross. He loves all of humanity – “his friends” – in the same way. As Lazarus (“God helped”) experienced effective help from Jesus, so every person in the Paschal Mystery experiences his saving power. The Risen Lord “lets man walk,” and also imparts to his believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is he who brings life and “resurrects” (First Reading). Thanks to him, man can experience the “opening of the tomb,” “resurrection,” the transition from death to life, from sin and the grace, from “life according to the flesh” to “life according to the Spirit” (Second Reading). The Holy Spirit is the power to die to sin and to live to God in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:31; Gal 5:24). Thanks to him, a disciple of Christ can say after Thomas: “Let us also go to die with him.”

3. ANALYSIS OF THE EUCHOLOGICAL TEXTS OF THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT, CYCLE A

The words of the Collect show Jesus Christ, who out of love gave his life for the world’s salvation. This statement shows the theological meaning of the *Pascha* and refers to the mystery presented in the texts of the Fifth Sunday’s Lectionary. Jesus’ death on the cross was redemptive – Christ saved humanity from eternal death, the consequence of sin. In the Paschal Mystery, he redeemed and granted humanity eternal life. The resurrection of Lazarus is a foreshadowing of what God has done for all of humanity in the Paschal Mystery. The request of the Collect focuses on imitating Christ’s love –

a love “to the end,” giving up one’s life. Believers are not only to learn such love from the Master. He enables them to do so. It is his Spirit who pours out God’s love in believers (cf. Rom 5:5). United with Christ, they have the strength to love their enemies (cf. Mt 5:43-47), without contempt for anyone (cf. Lk 14:13), with forgiveness (cf. Mt 18:21), with patience and goodness (cf. Rom 12:14-21), with self-sacrifice (cf. Eph 25-32) and with self-denial (cf. Phil 2:1-11). Christ on the Cross manifested such love, and it is this love with which he empowers the faithful, who through Baptism are united with his Paschal Mystery. Sharing in such love is also the fruit of the Eucharist. In the context of the readings of the Lectionary, this can mean rising continually from the “tomb of selfishness” in order to “resurrect” true love, to “untie the hands” to give, and to be able to “walk” like Lazarus – to experience “life to the full.” Christ-like love will be the concrete expression of what Paul’s call to “live by the Spirit” means (cf. Second Reading).¹⁸

The Prayer over the Offerings portrays Lent as a time when God’s people come to know the mystery of Christ anew. It is not only an intellectual knowledge, but an existential knowledge: believers come to know Christ in the Word, they “see” him acting in the Eucharistic celebration, they “renew” the baptismal graces given by him and they imitate him in their everyday life – they live the baptismal graces, that is, they imitate the mystery of Christ. The Lenten “knowledge” of Christ awakens in believers a desire for transformation and conversion. They ask God to “cleanse them from their sins” because they are aware of the disproportion between the gifts received and their personal response. In the Lenten transformation, Christ addresses man anew with the word of reconciliation. He brings people out of the “depths and darkness” of sin, frees them from death, and communicates the gift of new life.

The center of the Mass Preface is the mystery of Christ, who is the source of new life. This theme is developed in two contexts: in the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus and the gift of the Easter sacraments. In the context of the resurrection of Lazarus, the Son of God is presented in his human (*verus homo*) and divine (*Deus aeternus*) natures. These two realities correspond, in a way, to two actions: weeping (*flevit amicum*) and resurrection

¹⁸ Lauren Pristas, *Collects of the Roman Missals: A Comparative Study of the Sundays in Proper Seasons before and after the Second Vatican Council* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 145; Jan Miazek, *Misterium Wielkiego Postu w modlitwach mszalnych dawnej i współczesnej liturgii rzymskiej. Studium liturgiczno-teologiczne* (Warszawa: [Jan Miazek], 1997), 232; Adam Durak, *Treści uczestnictwa we Mszy świętej w świetle formuł eucharystycznych Mszału Rzymskiego dla diecezji polskich* (Piła: Wydział Teologiczny ATK, 1992), 39.

(*tumulo suscitavit*). Jesus' tears, leaving aside the meaning of pain at the death of a friend, signify emotion over the darkness of man's mortal fate. Jesus, however, as true God and Lord of Life, comes to change that fate – he resurrects Lazarus. Jesus' profound union with the Father, expressed in an attitude of prayer, creates new life where there was death. This event is an eloquent sign that Jesus is the "life and resurrection," stronger than death. In this event, the sacramental dimension of Jesus' life becomes evident: in his human experience, he takes on all the tragedy of humanity to renew man from within with his divine power.¹⁹

The second part of the Embolism shows the Easter sacraments as the source of new life. The death of Lazarus is an "icon" of the experience of all humanity subject to death (and sin). As Jesus, full of mercy, bent down to Lazarus, he bends down to all humanity. The resurrection of Lazarus is a sign of bringing people from the grave of sin to a new life. The gift of eternal life is offered to believers in the sacraments of the Church. They are a celebration of Christ's victory over death (his Passover) and have a special significance in the transmission of life to believers. The term "Easter sacraments" refers especially to the reality of Baptism. It is in Baptism that God's life is offered to man – the baptized person participates in the life of the Father through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The task of Christians is to constantly renew and strengthen this gift.

The text of the Prayer after Communion connects the sacrament of Baptism with the Eucharist. Baptism incorporates us into the Church – then believers become "Christ's body, and individually parts of it" (1 Cor 12:27). The prayer presents the Eucharist, which "renews" this grace in the baptized. Participation in the Eucharist thus has an ecclesial dimension: it builds and strengthens the bond of the Body of Christ with its Head. The request of the prayer reveals the fruit of receiving Holy Communion as "always being a living member of Christ." Being "alive" is possible only through Christ. It is he who, in the mystery of this Sunday, by raising Lazarus from the grave, reveals his life-giving power. By the power of Easter, in the sacraments of Easter, he frees believers from the "tomb of sin" (cf. Preface), communicates eternal life to them and strengthens them in the Eucharist (cf. Communion

¹⁹ Gueric DeBona, *Between the Ambo and the Altar. Biblical Preaching and The Roman Missal. Year A* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2013), 80-81; Antonio Donghi, "I prefazi di Quaresima," in *Il Messale Romano del Vaticano II. Orazionale e lezionario*, vol. 1: *La celebrazione del Mistero di Cristo nell'anno liturgico* (Torino: Elle Di Ci Leumann, 1985), 281; Stanisław Czerwik, *Prefacje o misteriach Chrystusa w Mszaie Rzymskiej Pawła VI. Geneza i teologia* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ATK, 1984), 170.

Antiphon). Through Christ, every baptized person, in the concrete realities of life, is to be a “living member” of the Church. In the context of the Fifth Sunday liturgy, this is expressed in a living faith, in “living by the Spirit” (cf. Second Reading), and above all, in imitating Christ's love (cf. Collect).

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This Sunday, the faithful thank God for Baptism, which is the passage from death to life. In this sacrament, the Christian died to sin and was “raised” to new life. The celebration of the Fifth Sunday of Lent shows this grace in several ways. The baptized person has been freed from sin, that is, spiritual death. In the sacrament of Baptism, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his justification was accomplished – he was “raised” to new life. In this way, the faithful were freed from eternal death, since the wage for sin is death. Jesus Christ in the Paschal Mystery defeated eternal death and saved man from it. Biological death, which is humanity’s common experience, has been transformed by Christ – it is now not a hopeless end, but a gain (cf. Phil 1:21). The baptized have been given eternal life. This is because Jesus Christ is “the life and the resurrection,” and whoever believes in him bears within himself divine life that cannot be destroyed even by physical death. Christians, having the Spirit of the Risen One within them, live with the certainty of the future resurrection of the body. The graces granted are renewed in the faithful in the Eucharistic celebration, because the Eucharist is the remedy for eternal life. Whoever eats the body of the Lord will not die forever. Christ gives believers a share in God's life and effectively defends against the sin that leads to death.

The obligation resulting from the grace received can be summarized in words taken from the Prayer after Communion: “To always be counted among the members of Christ.” This task is fulfilled when the baptized person follows the Spirit of the Risen Lord and abides in the new life received in Baptism. It is also about developing a living faith and remaining in a relationship with Jesus, according to his assurance: “Whoever believes in me has eternal life.” The baptized are called to rise continually from death to life in the power of the Holy Spirit. This involves daily dying to sin, putting off the old self and one’s dead works. The call to “be a living member of the Church” is realized especially in imitation of Christ’s love.

The “unveiling” of the central theme of the sacred texts requires a homilist to analyze thoroughly and use the hermeneutical tools appropriate to li-

turgical preaching. Through a synthesis of the readings of the Lectionary and the eucharistical texts, exemplified in this article, the homilist can bring out the central message of the Word of God intended for a particular celebration. This synthesis helps to make the preaching more concrete and should be, along with the preacher's meditation, the starting point for the preparation of each homily.

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INTERPRETACJA SŁOWA BOŻEGO W LITURGII NA PRZYKŁADZIE PIĄTEJ NIEDZIELI WIELKIEGO POSTU CYKL A

Streszczenie

Podstawową zasadą, którą powinien kierować się homilista w interpretacji tekstów biblijnych w liturgii jest wierność Pismu Świętemu i Kościołowi, który ma misję strzeżenia i wyjaśniania słowa Bożego. Oznacza to konieczność posługiwania się przez głosiciela słowa Bożego sprawdzonymi narzędziami, do których należy hermeneutyka biblijna. W przypadku przepowiadania homilijnego, które dokonuje się w wydarzeniu liturgicznym chodzi również o uwzględnienie faktu, iż „kontekst liturgiczny jest kluczem do interpretacji fragmentów biblijnych proklamowanych w trakcie celebracji” (DH 15). Artykuł ukazuje, jak interpretować słowo Boże w liturgii na przykładzie V niedzieli Wielkiego Postu cyklu A. Uwzględnienie zasad hermeneutycznych pozwala homiliście wydobywać wymowę kerygmatyczną czytań mszalnych każdej niedzieli.

Słowa kluczowe: słowo Boże; liturgia; lekcjonarz; homilia; przepowiadanie.