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L'ubomir PETRIK

Homily as a Dialogue

Introduction

The most important mission of the priest is to preach the Gospel. It is especially done so in his service of preaching. It is literary his daily bread.

Church emphasises one kind of a sermon, a homily, which is the purest form of the sermon. "It is strongly recommended to use the homily as a part of the Liturgy itself; in it are from the holy text explained the mysteries of faith and the rules of Christian life during the liturgical year. Especially during the masses (liturgies), which are celebrated on Sundays and festive days in the presence of the people, the homily should not be left out without a serious reason" (SC 52).

It is necessary to understand the term of the sermon in its broader sense as the term of the homily, which is a specifically determined preaching. Therefore, both terms are used in this lecture. Generally, it is possible to refer to the homily as to the sermon, but not every sermon is the homily.

Homily

The homily is defined as the sermon, based on the holy text, which had been read from the Holy Gospel or the liturgical text, while taking into the consideration the celebrated mystery and specific needs of the listeners¹. Of course, there exist also topical and periodic sermons for various topics. They are not completely excluded but the homily has an exclusive position. Especially due to the fact that it is flexible and adaptable, it is possible to inform the people about any topic. So the homily is not only the exegesis of the biblical text, but it is connected with the application for the concrete life of the people. The application

¹ See in: J. Vrabec, *Homiletika*, Trnava: SSV v CN Bratislava 1987, p. 31–32.

has also the social context. But it cannot be misused, for example for politicking, although the priest can, actually is obliged to point at the questions of the public life. Another example of the application misuse would be for nationalism, although the priest can point at the national questions, or patriotism. But the kerygma in the preacher's activity cannot be lost! "The preacher's activity of the priest, many times very difficult today, must not explain the Word of God only in general and abstract way, but it should target the minds of listeners more effectively, it should apply the eternal truth of the Gospel for the concrete circumstances of life" (PO 4). The homily does not deal with several thoughts, or topics, usually it concentrates on one idea, or one topic. It is expected from the homily to go in depth rather than in width. Homily is always an integral part of the Liturgy itself. It can be preached by only the bishop and the priest, possibly the deacon, and its time is after the reading from the Holy Gospel.

Familiar Talk

The homily actually means the familiar talk. An expressive example of it can be the talk held by the resurrected Jesus Christ with the disciples on their way to Emmaus (Lk 24, 13–35). The origin of the word comes from the Greek word *homileó* – I meet, I get together; *homilein* – be together, have a conversation; *homoleia* – a familiar talk. Here we get down to the basics. To give the homily does not mean to dictate something to the people, or to give them orders, to command them, to give them some information only, or to ask something from them...It is a talk, or better a dialogue.

At first sight or at first hearing it seems that the sermon is a monologue, because one person talks and others listen. The basic of the talk is not alternating talking of the persons involved. In that case also the alternating prayer of the psalms would be a talk. The basic of the talk is rather the way of participation of the listeners, or the people involved in the talk. If the listener expresses his participation by words, that is the case of a real talk. If he expresses his participation by facial expression, or gestures, it is the case of a virtual dialogue. So the partner in the talk has many other ways of expression, apart from words. Professor Jozef Vrabec² introduces the term „gestus questions“³ in homiletics for the motoric impulses of the listeners.

² Jozef Vrabec (*1914–†2003), Mons. prof. ThDr., was a Slovak Roman Catholic priest, a theologian in the field of pastoral theology and homiletics, a professor at Saints Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, Comenius University in Bratislava. In 1970–1995 he worked as a professor of pastoral theology and the head of the department, he was the chairman of the Slovak Catechetical Committee (1971), the sub dean (1980–1982), the dean of the Faculty of Theology (1991–1994), a diocese consultant (1988–1993), a pontifical prelate (16 November 1990), a professor of homiletics at the Institute of Theology in Nitra (1994–1998). He is known

We can imagine a real familiar talk – a talk in the family, where seven people meet in the living room, for example grandparents, parents and three children. They are sitting opposite to each other. The father of the family, for example, has the main word, and explains something. His wife and the grandfather express their participation by words. The grandmother and children participate in the talk in a different way, for example by facial expressions or gestures. Children react by smiling and gestures of surprise, the grandmother by the expression of thinking, because they are also intensively participating the talk. Can anyone dare to say that the grandmother and the children were not participating the talk, just because they were not talking? It would not be true.

Also homily, which is a familiar talk, must show the signs of the talk. Of course, we will not introduce a real dialogue into the homily, although it is possible to imagine a part of the homily in this way, for example during the holy masses for children. Particularly in the homily, it is the case of the *virtual dialogue*, regarding its content, as well as its form. The preacher who loves and knows the word of God, and loves and knows his people, in the homily gives the answers for the unsaid questions and offers the solutions of the problems. Homily is thus the actualised Gospel in the life of God's people. The word of God gives the answers for all the questions of the man. Therefore it is necessary for the preacher to understand deeply the word of God so that it could become the food for the man. The church fathers in the early Christian centuries are known by their homilies, for example St. John Zlatoústy. From his documents are mostly preserved “the interpretations of the Bible in the form of the homilies...No other church writer has ever explained the holy text in such a perfect and also a practical way, as St John did”⁴.

Homily is not just a pure teaching, it is the message of Jesus in the first place. The most important thing is, it is the word of God. It is not the word about God, it is the word of God. That means it is God talking to people in the homily.⁵ Therefore it is possible to end the homily by saying „Amen“, which means the confirmation of the previously proclaimed word. „The people of God gather

mainly by his publications from the field of homiletics, rhetoric, and pastoral science. Most of his works (53) were published in 1968–1992 as samizdats. His studies and publications concern the problems of faith, meditation, teaching about The Holy Spirit, homiletics, and pastoral methods. He educated hundreds of priests in Slovakia (among them also more Greek Catholic priests), who he oriented towards the excited life of faith. He stood out as an excellent preacher. In the spirit of the teaching of the present church magisterium, Jozef Vrablec sees the hope for the church in Slovakia in the development of small Christian communities and movements. See in: *Jozef Vrablec*. http://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jozef_Vrablec (06.02.2008).

³ See in: J. Vrablec, dz. cyt., p. 104.

⁴ J. Špirko, *Patrológia. Životy, spisy a učenie sv. otcov*. Prešov: Spolok biskupa P. P. Gojdiča, 1995, reissued edition from 1939, p. 128.

⁵ See in: J. Vrablec, A. Fabian, *Homiletika I. – II. základná a materiálna*, Trnava: SSV, 2001, p. 103–111.

firstly by the word of the living God, which is by right required by all from the mouth of the priest“ (PO 4).

The Homilies from the 19th Century and from the Present

The fact that the homily is a dialogue, can be confirmed in this lecture by short passages from the history and the present. We will use several sermons by Eugen Fencik⁶ (in this lecture there will be 4 sermons; but there were studied 15 of them), published in the magazine “Listok“⁷ and handwritings of several sermons (4 sermons; but there were studied 6 of them)⁸. These are the sermons of Greek Catholic priests in the Eastern Slovakia from the 19th century, which I have found in the Archive of the Greek Catholic Archiepiscopal Office in Prešov. As the evidence there will be also used the short extracts from the present preaching activity of Greek Catholic priests in Slovakia, which I devoted to as an Instructor together with my student- Thesis writer in his Thesis in the academic year of 2007/2008⁹. All these homilies are assigned to the Sundays and festive days according to the liturgical calendar of the Greek Catholic Church, with the corresponding terminology.

When I was reading these selected sermons of the Greek Catholic priests again and again, and tried to see them in the context of the time they were preached in and the celebrations they were part of, I cannot help thinking that they were said with the big zeal and enthusiasm. Based on various rhetorical

⁶ Eugen Fencik (1844–1903) was a Greek Catholic priest in Mukacevo eparchy, a cultural personality and a writer. He wrote poetry, ballads, and legends from the life of intellectuals and clergy, historical dramas, liturgical expert literature (his known work is for example *Liturgika alebo objasnenie bohosluzenia*. Budapešť, 1878), various articles, sermons, etc. Published in the magazine “Listok“ (see the note below). See in: F. Kovač, *Vlastivedný slovník Rusínov-Ukrajincov. Prešovsko*. Prešov: Zväz Rusínov-Ukrajincov Slovenskej republiky, 1999, p. 358.

⁷ Listok: a religious-literary magazine – biweekly, which was published in Uzhorod in 1885–1903. The founder, publisher and editor in chief was Eugen Fencik. There were published popular-educational, artistic and religious materials for Mukacevo and Prešov eparchy. It contained also a regular column called Church speech (sermons). The contributors were also Greek Catholic priests from the Prešov eparchy Alexander Duchnovič and Alexander Pavlovič (mainly in the parts Additions (“Dodatky“), written in the language of the people). It played a very important role in its environment at that time. It had 25 subscribers, mostly from the Prešov eparchy (“Prjašivčina“). It was written in the Cyrillic alphabet (“Grand-Russian“ and so-called “jazyčije“). See in: F. Kovač, dz. cyt., p. 200, 358.

⁸ The translation of the original texts of the printed and handwritten homilies into the Slovak language in this lecture is liberal, done by the author of the lecture. Fencik’s printed sermons are written in the Cyrillic alphabet. Some handwritten sermons are written in the Cyrillic alphabet – “jazyčije“ and some in Roman alphabet - Šariš, or Zemplín dialect.

⁹ See in: M. Nastišin, *Súčasná kazateľská činnosť gréckokatolíckych kňazov na Slovensku ako súčasť novej evanjelizácie*. Prešov: Gréckokatolícka teologická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity, 2008. Diplomová práca (Thesis).

elements, from which I mention only some in this lecture, it is possible to see that these sermons could have been preached engagingly. When I see their written version and I add the assumed way of interpretation to it, I suppose they were sufficiently addressing.

I realised also one more fact. In the homily, we use a practical expert style today. It is a popular style, similar to the one used in the serious print and electronic media. Since we are in the presence of the media, in most cases we find it absolutely natural. It might not have been it this way in the 19th century. Some, especially handwritten homilies sound pathetic and affected, and on the other hand, some, especially the ones published in the magazine "Listok", sound very theoretically, abstractly. In some case they remind the lectures.

Another important point is the length of these sermons. Compared to the present, in most cases they are inadequately long.

Virtual Dialogue

The virtual dialogue, which is a very important part of the homily, has its inward and outward means¹⁰. The inner means is a certain charm of the preacher's personality, the preacher's personality that is bound to God, the "fire of faith" which burns, and his personal qualities. This inward means is really tied-up to the virtual dialogue, because if the preacher was an arrogant person, an unprincipled person, without the zeal, how could he hold a dialogue? The dialogue does not allow any putting on airs (feeling superior to others), arrogance, and disrespect for the partner in the dialogue. It is hard, if not impossible, to judge this inward means in the preacher's activity in the 19th century 100 or 200 years later. But it is different with the outward means.

As for the present preacher's activity, it would be possible to talk also about the inward means of the virtual dialogue. But this lecture more-or-less discusses some outward means of the virtual dialogue.

It is impossible not to mention a **rhetorical question** in the virtual dialogue¹¹. It increases the attention of the listeners. The preacher asks it to increase the interest, or to make the listeners better realise the known answer¹². There are rhetorical questions in the studied historical homilies. For example, in the Eugen Fencik's homily for The Sunday about the Healing the Blind (the fifth Sunday after the Easter "Pascha")¹³ are 8, or 10 rhetorical questions. Here are the two of them: „Does not the healing the blind from the birth ("sliporoždennaho") indi-

¹⁰ See in: J. Vrablec, *Homiletika*. Trnava: SSV v CN Bratislava, 1987, p.103–108.

¹¹ See in: J. Vrablec, *Homiletika*. Trnava: SSV v CN Bratislava, 1987, p. 105.

¹² See in: M. Šuráb, *Aby nás radi počúvali*. Nitra: Kňazský seminár sv. Gorazda, 2004, p. 142.

¹³ E. Fencik, *Cerkovnyja propovidi. Slovo v nedilju V. po paschi, o slipom*. In: *Listok. Duchovno-literárny časopis*. Užhorod: Tlačiareň Jozefa Fejšiša st., 1887, vol. 3., n. 9, p. 140–144.

cate evidently the truth that Christ The Saviour has brought the light to the whole blind world? That he has opened the spiritual eyes of the whole human-kind, that the Holy Gospel, which is His divine teaching, leads us even today, shows us the way, brings the light to us?¹⁴ Another example: „And do you know what has caused such a blissfulness in you?¹⁵ For example, in his homily for the St. Nicolaus Holiday¹⁶ are 7, or up to 14 rhetorical questions (they are some kind of the double questions). Out of the studied 15 printed sermons, only in the two of them the rhetorical questions are missing.

From the manuscripts of the sermons I will mention at least one question as an example: „Tell me what you want to choose: to enter the joy in heaven, or the eternal torments? Do you want to rule with the Christ in heaven forever, or to be damned forever?...?¹⁷ Out of 6 studied manuscripts, the rhetorical questions are missing in the two of them.

In principle, based on the studied homilies, we can say, that Greek Catholic priests used the rhetorical question. It is obvious that they used it in a bigger extent in the sermons published in the press. The reason surely was to provide the others an example of the master sermon.

Yet some examples of the rhetorical question from the present preacher's activity: „Why did this film, documenting the last 12 hours of the life of Jesus, His death on the cross, has roused such a discussion? Isn't it because it talks about the death, suffering, cross, surrender? Isn't it just because it talks about the foolishness of the cross, in which is hidden unspeakable love of God to us, the people?¹⁸ Another example: „Today we celebrate the Holiday of all holidays – The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. On one hand we are filled with the holiday atmosphere, but on the other hand we may be asking: «Can this very well-known holiday offer something new to us?»¹⁹ Another example: „Today we celebrate The Pentecost and we may be asking: Who is Holy Ghost? How should we imagine Him? We can imagine God The Father in some way, because each

¹⁴ E. Fencik, *Cerkovnyja propovidi. Slovo v nedilju V. po paschi, o slipom*. In: *Listok. Duchovno-literárny časopis*. Užhorod: Tlačiareň Jozefa Fejšiša st., 1887, vol. 3., n. 9, p. 142.

¹⁵ E. Fencik, *Cerkovnyja propovidi. Slovo v nedilju V. po paschi, o slipom*. In: *Listok. Duchovno-literárny časopis*. Užhorod: Tlačiareň Jozefa Fejšiša st., 1887, vol. 3., n. 9, p. 143.

¹⁶ E. Fencik, *Cerkovnyja propovidi. Slovo v deň iže vo svjatyh Otca našeho Nikolaja archiepi-skopa Mir Likijskich, čudotvorca*. In: *Listok. Duchovno-literárny časopis*. Užhorod: Tlačiareň Jozefa Fejšiša st., 1887, vol. 3., n. 22, p. 348–352.

¹⁷ Archív Gréckokatolíckeho arcibiskupstva (Greek Catholic Archiepiscopacy Archive) (further AGKAB) in Prešov: *Kázeň na 19. nedelju po Zoslani Svätého Ducha (rukopis (manuscript))*. Bez sign., Kázne (1810–1834), -1869, (anonymné (anonymous)): 1880, p. 3.

¹⁸ I. Cingel, *Homilia na 3. nedelju Veľkého pôstu – Krížupoklonná*. http://emailnew.azet.sk/MailRead.phtml?&i9=a0abbe1fe532&t_vypis=&mail=000000000000000005535&idF=0 (12.10.2007).

¹⁹ M. Keruľ-Kmec, *Homilia na Svätú a veľkú nedelju Paschy*. http://emailnew.azet.sk/MailRead.phtml?&i9=a0abbe1fe532&t_vypis=&mail=000000000000000005571&idF=0 (23.11.2007).

of us has a father on the earth, as well as God The Son, since we have experienced having the son on the earth, too. But The Holy Ghost?²⁰ One more example: „In each of us there is a desire after the certain type of perfection, which the youth of today refers to with the expression “to be in“.» This desire itself is not bad, but is it enough for the fullness of life?²¹

In the present, according to *The Survey of the Preacher's Climate in the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia*, done by the student in the above mentioned Thesis, out of one hundred priests, who have joined the survey, as many as 60% use the rhetorical question in each homily, 32% use it sometimes and only 8% do not use rhetorical questions in the homily.

Subjection (“Subjekcia”). *Subjection* – a very effective rhetorical form, in which the preacher uses the lively exchange of the questions and answers, while giving the answer for the given question, was found by me in historical sermons only in the Eugen Fencik's printed sermons. „If you had prayed heartily, if you had turned your soul to God, if you had cried out two-or three tears of the repent, if you had wiped the tears of a little orphan, or to somebody else, do you remember, what you felt in your heart then? No, nowhere in the world can you find similar happiness and blissfulness. And do you know what has caused such blissfulness in you? It was the coming closer to God. Just imagine what a blissfulness that will be when we totally get united with God!²²

In most cases these sermons do not contain a lively exchange of questions, usually they contain one, or more questions, followed by one answer, and thus it only indicates the *subjection*.

An example from the present sermon: „The snake said to Eve: «Who are you?» Eve answered: «I am a happy person, I am free.» «Prove it!», said the snake: «Get an apple!» Here the man realises his power, the fact, that he is naked and weak, he is abandoned. And the snake continues up to this day: «Are you a big man?! So don't be afraid, go to the pub, get something to drink, show your wife, hit her so that she understood, teach your children the order, - you are the stronger one, you are the parent, the teacher, the head, the director. You have the power.» But the power is manifested differently!²³

Dialogism (“Dialogizmus”). Sometimes the preacher simulates a dialogue between him and his listeners, or introduces in the scene other persons, who he talks to.²⁴ This rhetorical figure of speech is very strong in its effect on the lis-

²⁰ P. Labanič, *Nedela Zostúpenia Svätého Ducha*. In: *Duchovný pastier: Revue pre teológiu a duchovný život*. Trnava: SSV, 2006, p. 143.

²¹ M. Hospodár, *Homília na sviatok Turíc*. In: *Duchovný pastier: Revue pre teológiu a duchovný život*, Trnava SSV, 2006, p. 189.

²² E. Fencik, *Cerkovnyja propovidi. Slovo v nedilju V. po paschi, o slipom*. In: *Listok. Duchovno-literárny časopis*. Užhorod: Tlačiareň Jozefa Fejšiša st., 1887, vol. 3., n. 9, p.143.

²³ Š. Vansac, *Homília na sviatok Krista Kráľa*. http://emailnew.azet.sk/MailRead.phtml?&i9=a0abbe1fe532&t_vypis=&mail=00000000000000005403&idF=0 (26.04.2007).

²⁴ See in: J. Vrabec, *Homiletika*, Trnava: SSV v CN Bratislava, 1987, p.106.

teners. For example in one handwritten sermon it looks as follows: „But you will ask me here, why He let them torture Him, why He wanted to die in such a disgraceful death? He (Jesus Christ) answered that himself and explained that: He came to this world to find and save what had been lost and had died.“²⁵ Or also in the same sermon: „Heavenly Saviour! What do You say about such a trading (“handľarstvo“)? How does Your heart feel? Not only Your death, Your martyrdom, but You alone are valued so little and shabbily. Oh, godlessness, who can actually utter you! The sinner! Even if you don't want to know the value of your soul, do at least the following: don't sell it for such a shabby price again. Look, here on the cross is hanged your Redeemer, dead, naked, anguished, broken (“zmordovaný“), and sucked dry (“vycicaný“) to the last drop of blood. Why? For your soul, which He had to redeem in such a high price; so He has the right for it and actually it belongs to Him. How can you sell it for such a shabby and useless things and waste it? Oh, soul! I call you one more time with the words of St Augustine ... So, can you still sell your soul for such a worthless price? No, my dearest Saviour, it will not happen any more tomorrow. Your everlasting love, You loved me with, wants to encourage me in that ...“²⁶ We can see here even the elements of dramatization, which contributes to the dialogue very much.

Here are several illustrations of dialogism from the present homilies: „Many people ask themselves a question: «Why should I go to church on Sunday? Wouldn't it be better to stay at home and sleep, or go somewhere and enjoy life?» Others criticise the Church and almost every commandment is in their way. And others... You know that. And possibly, we do it, too...“²⁷ Or another example: „When we meet the Lord, each of us first will be asked the question – who do you think I am, who am I for you? If we happen to see in him our personal Saviour, then we are on the way of conversion with Him, so that we understood in our hearts and by faith that Jesus is Christ, the Son of the living God. Then we are tested, whether we own Him (confess to others that we belong to Him). This trial certainly brings denial from the side of a man, when we say as Peter that we don't know this man. If our relationship with Jesus gets to the stage of love and we tell Him that we love Him, then the Lord invites us also to His suffering, to do His will, since He leads us where we would never go ourselves. Peter and Paul experienced that and they got united with Jesus“²⁸.

²⁵ AGKAB in Prešov: *Prišol Syn Človeka, aby spasil to, što zahynulo. Kázeň na Mt 18, 11 (rukopis (manuscript))*. Varia, Inv. n. 1276, Year: 1759 – 1944, sign. 0, Kázne: 1802, p. 3.

²⁶ AGKAB in Prešov: *Prišol Syn Človeka, aby spasil to, što zahynulo. Kázeň na Mt 18, 11 (rukopis (manuscript))*. Varia, Inv. n. 1276, Year: 1759 – 1944, sign. 0, Kázne: 1802, p. 4–5.

²⁷ M. Kerul'-Kmec, *Homilie III*. Košice: Casp. spol., 2005, p. 15.

²⁸ J. Miňo, *Homília na sviatok svätých Petra a Pavla*. In: *Duchovný pastier. Revue pre teológiu a duchovný život*. Tmava: SSV, 2006, p. 233.

Concession. The speaker concedes something that speaks against him, or that is seemingly against him, so that he can gain himself a favour²⁹. In one of the manuscript homilies, the following concession can be found: „Out of all God’s commands ... none is as annoying to our mind, our will and our deeds as this one: *Love your enemies*, do well to those who hate you. It is true, honest Christians, that all God’s commands can be obeyed. God, the indefinable truth, has not constituted a single command that the Christian people could not obey and keep. Yet, it is difficult to love the one who hounds us with a biased heart. He who undermines honour and reputation by gossip and a sharp tongue, that is - he who discommends, finds another man and judges him, despite his conscience. So says our Saviour Christ about such a man: Who has made you the judge over your neighbour? Don’t you know my command: Judge not, that you may not be judged? Honest Christians, I say, it is hard to love the one... who strives to replace our life with death. Those who have experienced it know. They know it and say along with St. Augustine: «that ... nothing is as hard as loving your enemy». But honest and dear Christians! Although this is, according to our sinful body, a difficult and a harsh command, still, according to God’s love, it is, for our spiritual salvation, the sweetest and the most beneficial remedy...³⁰

In a published funeral sermon, by an unknown author, is the following example of the concession: „Do not worry about your future, careworn widow, do not worry, orphaned children! Yes, (“pravda”), your husband (“muž), or your father has died. You have been abandoned by an obvious support; you have been abandoned by the one, who was to care for your future. Do not forget, though, that the man, resting in this grave, was appointed by God to take care of you. God has withdrawn him and thus undoubtedly appointed other people who will be your guardians instead of him. Do not worry, for God himself has taken the care of your fate. Your future is in the powerful, best hands. However, you mourn, because the one who has died, was your father, the one whom you loved the most. After all, it is hard to bury a husband and a father. At such funerals, it would be inhuman not to be worried; it would be inhuman not to shed tears. However, may your worry be lessened by knowing that you have yet another Father. The Father, who will never die and who loves you even more ...³¹

From the present preacher’s activity: „Two people, eagerly awaiting that Jesus, who helped so many people in their misery, will also in their case perform a miracle and heal them. They shout at Jesus: «Son of David, have mercy ...» And Jesus’ reaction? None! He simply goes about his way. Them, the two blind, handicapped people, you can surely imagine how “comfortable” it must have

²⁹ See in: J. Vrablec, *Homiletika*. Trnava: SSV v CN Bratislava, 1987, p.106.

³⁰ AGKAB in Prešov: *Kázeň na 19. nedeľu po Zoslani Svätého Ducha (rukopis (manuscript))*. Bez sign., kázne (1810–1834), -1869, (anonymné (anonymous)): 1880, p. 1–2.

³¹ *Slovo nad hrobom otca rodiny*. In: *Listok. Duchovno-literárny časopis*. Užhorod: Tlačiareň Jozefa Fejšiša st., 1888, vol. 4., n. 22, p. 350.

been for them to follow Jesus. And Jesus? Nothing! He didn't even turn back. And we could easily say that Jesus let those people torment³². Another example: „We might find it harsh, unacceptable for a modern person. But we do not need to ponder much to find out that sacrifice and self-denial are part of life³³“.

Prolepsis. It is a prefiguration or anticipation of an objection, so that the speaker dispossesses it of its power³⁴. The speaker brings up the objection and responds to it straightaway³⁵. This figure of speech arouses the attention of the listeners and sustains the virtual dialogue. It should be included in every homily. It is known for the typical forms it is being introduced by. Here is an example from the studied homilies: „But you will ask me here, why He let them torture Him, why He wanted to die in such a disgraceful death?³⁶ Another example: „Someone might say to all this – God does not need our offertory, after all, it is the others who take it and use it. It is true, God does not need our offertory. But neither us he needs, because we all, as well as the whole world, can add nothing to his grace. It is us who need God, it is us who need his love³⁷“.

The present homilies: „And at this moment, we say to God: «God, but how come? I can't make it. I won't manage! » But God says: «Do not be afraid, for I will be with you...» just like he said to Mary³⁸. Or: „We may be shocked in our heart by the people of Bethlehem and by the people who betrayed, denied and tortured the Lord Jesus today. How could they?! Christ had never hurt anyone. How could God allow this to happen?!³⁹ Another example: „If I say now that we can be like Mary you might think I've lost my mind...⁴⁰“

Correction. „When you say in the evening and in the morning: «I believe in God, the Father almighty», do not forget, Christians, that this prayer, or rather

³² M. Stul'ak, *Homília na nedeľu o uzdravení dvoch slepcov*. http://emailnew.azet.sk/MailRead.phtml?&i9=a0abbe1fe532&t_vypis=&mail=0000000000000005484&idF=0 (18.09.2007).

³³ M. Kerul'-Kmec, *Homília na sviatok Povýšenia svätého kríža*. http://emailnew.azet.sk/MailRead.phtml?&i9=a0abbe1fe532&t_vypis=&mail=0000000000000005571&idF=0 (23.11.2007).

³⁴ See in: J. Vrabec, *Homiletika*. Trnava: SSV v CN Bratislava, 1987, p.107.

³⁵ See in: L. Stanček, *Kňaz rétor*. Spišská Kapitula – Spišské Podhradie: Kňazský seminár biskupa Jána Vojtaššáka, 2001, p. 237.

³⁶ AGKAB in Prešov: *Prišol Syn Človeka, aby spasil to, što zahynulo. Kázeň na Mt 18, 11 (rukopis (manuscript))*. Varia, Inv. n. 1276, Year: 1759 – 1944, sign. 0, Kázne: 1802, p. 3.

³⁷ AGKAB in Prešov: *Dobre zaopatriňa ne lem samomu Bohu,... Kázeň na sviatok sv. Mikuláša (rukopis (manuscript))*. Bez sign., Príležitostné kázne (1759–1871): 1850, 1851, p. 3.

³⁸ M. Stul'ak, *Homília na sviatok Zvestovania*. http://emailnew.azet.sk/MailRead.phtml?&i9=a0abbe1fe532&t_vypis=&mail=0000000000000005484&idF=0 (18.09.2007).

³⁹ I. Molčányi, *Homília na Veľký piatok*. In.: *Duchovný pastier. Revue pre teológiu a duchovný život*. Trnava: SSV, 2007, vol. LXXXVIII, n. 2, p. 102.

⁴⁰ M. Stul'ak, *Homília na sviatok Zvestovania*. http://emailnew.azet.sk/MailRead.phtml?&i9=a0abbe1fe532&t_vypis=&mail=0000000000000005484&idF=0 (18.09.2007).

a symbol, was composed by the saint fathers of the Council of Nicaea...⁴¹ The preacher has corrected himself not because he has made a mistake, but to attract a bigger attention of the listeners.

The term of *virtual dialogue* is rather new. Based on the quoted above, it is clear enough that what it expresses was not unknown to the preachers from among the Greek Catholic clergy of the 19th century. On the contrary, they commonly used it. It is a very positive finding, because even today there can be objections against the virtual dialogue in the homily. However, we have found out that even these days most of the priests in Slovakia like to use the external means of the virtual dialogue, which we can find very pleasing.

Axiom of the Virtual Dialogue

As far as the homilies from the 19th century are concerned, it is difficult, if not impossible to find out whether the priests, in the actual delivery of the homily, adhered what we now call in homiletics axiom of the virtual dialogue: „The preacher must be near the subject and near the listeners“⁴². To put this axiom into existence, the preacher must meet two requirements. He must not read the homily, nor peek into the notes and neither learn the text of the homily by heart⁴³. It may be assumed, however, that some priests, influenced by the ancient rhetorics, learned their homilies by heart at the time. Some must have read them, but undoubtedly there were the preachers who were, during their homily, near the subject as well as near the listeners. From the autobiography of the saint priest of Ars, John Vianney, we learn something about his preacher's activity. All days long, he would relentlessly work on his homilies, which he wrote and later learned by heart by speaking sotto voce for hours. Yet, he did not perform that well at the pulpit on Sunday and the word of God stuck in his throat. „Only when he was struck by a sacred ardour and set free from his manuscript, it would go easier“⁴⁴.

Nowadays, according to the above mentioned source *Prieskum kazatel'skej klímy v Gréckokatolíckej cirkvi na Slovensku (The Survey of the Preacher's Climate in the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia)*, out of one hundred priests who participated in the survey, only 2% of them read the homily, 33% sometimes read a quotation, or a story, but 65% of the priests, on principle, do not read the homily at all.

⁴¹ E. Fencik, *Cerkovnyja propovidi. Slovo v nedilju 7-uju posli paschi: sv. otec*. In: *Listok. Duchovno-literárny časopis*. Užhorod: Tlačiareň Jozefa Fejšiša st., 1888, vol. 4., n. 11, p.173–174.

⁴² J. Vrablec, *Homiletika*. Trnava: SSV v CN Bratislava, 1987, p.108.

⁴³ See in: J. Vrablec, *Homiletika*. Trnava: SSV v CN Bratislava, 1987, p.108.

⁴⁴ W. Hünermann, *Aj diabol pred ním kapituloval*. Spišská Kapitula – Spišské Podhradie: Kňazský seminár biskupa Jána Vojtaššáka, 1992, p. 218–219.

It would be possible to deal with many other figures of speech, supporting the fact that in the past, as well as in the present, the homily is and should be a dialogue. We could also talk about a demonstration, and so on.

Some More Findings

When I studied selected Eugen Fencik's sermons and manuscripts of the sermons of the priests working in the Prešov eparchy in the 19th century, I could not avoid thinking over the question whether they are the homilies or not. According to my opinion, they definitely are! They come from the previously-read word of God, or celebrated mystery, focusing on that mystery, and the needs of the listeners at the same time. I find it very important. It is necessary to say that in the 19th century there were known various "enlightenment", "agitation" sermons, or sermons reminding political speech in Slovakia. I have not met anything like that in the sermons of the Greek Catholic priests. From the point of view of the contemporary homiletics it is a positive finding.

Our generation of the priests in Slovakia, in this case, mainly Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic, compose their homily according to the strict structure by Prof. Jozef Vrabec, which originates from the civil rhetorics and homilies of the Fathers of the Church: AI, KE, DI, PAR, MY, ADE.⁴⁵ This is definitely missing in the 19th century homilies. There is not even an indication, and if, then very little, of the certain dialogue gradation: what happened – information, explanation, encouragement and unification. In spite of that, we cannot say that the homilies did not come out of the holy text of the word of God and the liturgical mystery. The sermon is not the homily due to its structure which we are familiar with in our environment. There exist also other homily structures which respect the dialogue gradation in a different way. It is also necessary to say that the eastern preacher's practise is distant from the certain system, but from the certain point of view, it is closer to the word of God and Liturgy.

A very interesting and positive fact is, that despite being very lengthy, the sermons deal with the single thought, single topic, and single event. For example, the verse of Mt 18, 11: „For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost”⁴⁶. Or the verse of Jn 9, 11: „I went and washed, and I received sight”⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ See in: J. Vrabec, *Homiletika*, Trnava: SSV v CN Bratislava, 1987, p. 54. AI – antropologická indukcia (anthropological induction), KE – kerygma (kerygma), DI – didaskália (didaskalia), PAR – parakléza (paraklesis), MY – mystagógia (mystagogy) and ADE – antropologická dedukcia (anthropological deduction).

⁴⁶ AGKAB in Prešov: *Prišol Syn Človeka, aby spasil to, što zahynulo. Kázeň na Mt 18, 11 (rukopis (manuscript))*. Varia, Inv. n. 1276, Year: 1759 – 1944, sign. 0, Kázne: 1802. Note to the verse of Mt 18, 11: „This verse is an interpolation of Lk 19, 10. Neovulgata does not mention it. It is in some manuscripts...” It is mentioned also in Church-Slavonic Gospel Books.

And so on. Or Saint Mother of God's Pass-Away Holiday ("Zosnutie Presvätej Bohorodičky")⁴⁸, St Nicholas Holiday⁴⁹ etc. They are not composed of several points. At that time, there were also in Slovakia known three or more-point sermons. Although there are some paragraphs in some manuscripts, they do not influence the content, as for its division. They could have served the preacher for remembering the text better. But this is only an assumption. In the studied printed Fencik's sermons, there are no paragraphs or points at all.

Nowadays, according to the previously mentioned survey, up to 79% of the priests find the source in the word of God, 16% is inspired rather by the liturgical period which homiletics accepts, and only 5% of the priests like the topical sermons. As for the number of ideas, out of one hundred priests who participated in the survey, up to 63% give the sermon based on one idea from the word of God on principle, 21% on one idea, but sometimes on more, 8% more ideas and 8% preaches rather on topics.

Streszczenie

Homilia jako dialog

Autor wykładu *Homilia jako dialog* rozważa rzeczywistość, w której homilia jest faktycznym dialogiem i dlatego musi ukazywać znaki takiego dialogu. Zostało to potwierdzone nie tylko poprzez powoływanie się na literaturę naukową, ale także poprzez przykłady zewnętrznych zasobów retorycznych homilii grekokatolickich księży słowackich, począwszy od dziewiętnastego wieku do teraz. Celem wykładu jest nakreślenie w zarysie tematyki dialogu w homilii, z przeświadczeniem, że kaznodzieje w homilii nie moralizują, nie osądzają, nie dyktują, nie rozkazują (nakazują), ale oferują odpowiedzi, prowadzą dialog miłości i z pokorą dają przestrzeń Jezusowi Chrystusowi, który chce zdobyć człowieka poprzez homilię i pomóc mu.

⁴⁷ E. Fencik, *Cerkovnyja propovidi. Slovo v nedilju V. po paschi, o slipom*. In: *Listok. Duchovno-literárny časopis*. Užhorod: Tlačiareň Jozefa Fejšiša st., 1887, vol. 3., n. 9, p. 140.

⁴⁸ AGKAB in Prešov: *Kázeň na sviatok Zosnutia Presvätej Bohorodičky (rukopis (manuscript))*. *Ruská Poruba*. Bez sign., Slovenské – nárečové kázne (19. stor.): 1868.

⁴⁹ E. Fencik, *Cerkovnyja propovidi. Slovo v deň iže vo svjatyh Otca našeho Nikolaja archjepiskopa Mir Likajskich, čudotvorca*. In: *Listok. Duchovno-literárny časopis*. Užhorod: Tlačiareň Jozefa Fejšiša st., 1887, vol. 3., n. 22, p. 348–352.