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Narrativity and Evangelization

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NARRATIVITY AND EVANGELIZATION

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The proclamation of the Gospel “only reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it”.¹ For that to happen, the Church has to constantly reflect on the ways of communication of the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is important that the methods and style of preaching the Gospel are adapted to the changes taking place in reality and in the lives of individual persons.

At the beginning of the XXI century evangelization must take into account the role of the mass media in the creation of contemporary culture and its impact on human thinking and its ability of perception of the world. Nowadays, the culture of picture and indirect way of communicating through specific media and devices seems to dominate in society. Therefore, there were demands for broad application of the achievements of modern civilization in the proclamation of the Gospel in order to adjust the transmission of the Christian message to the requirements of the so-called communications 2.0.

Regardless of the technical achievements of humanity faith still comes by hearing (cf. Rom 10:17), and images, movie scenes or television presentations of a sequence of events can not replace the spoken word both used by the social communicators, as well as in direct interpersonal contacts. To evangelize is to proclaim Jesus Christ. That means telling people the story of the eternal word of the Father, who took flesh

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¹ EN no. 23.

and since that moment has been shaping the history of humanity. To evangelize is also to imitate Jesus, who as *Communicator perfectus*² tells people about the love of the heavenly Father. Therefore, it is not possible to imagine evangelization without the stories that move the heart to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The stories have the power that enables people to rule the world. Their power is appreciated by experts of narrative marketing, who see in them the best way of gaining customers and persuading people to political ideas.³ For this reason, it is worth looking at the narrative nature of the message of the Good News of salvation, as well as realizing the advantages of the proclamation of the Gospel in the stories and paying attention to the rules for fruitful practice of storytelling about Jesus and His saving mission.

THE STORY OF JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION AS CORE OF THE EVANGELIZATION

In the apostolic period, kerygma was the basic proclamation of the Christian message of salvation by the Apostles.⁴ Proclaiming the kerygma doesn't mean so much speaking about supernatural issues but rather shouting or announcing boldly and in a loud voice to the world the salvation of God in Christ Jesus. The transmission of the kerygma can be compared to a mission of a herald who powerful and solemnly communicates to people, on behalf of the king at some public place, a message of a decisive event in the history of the kingdom. The content of the Christian kerygma is an important event for the spread of God's kingdom in the world and thus significant for all people. At the centre of Christian preaching are neither human sins, nor an abstract system of truths, nor the obligations that people have to follow, but the good news of a loving God, who saves the world through his Son. The victory of Jesus over death reveals the fullness of God's love which frees man from the bondage of evil and death.⁵

Giving people the message of God and His love is talking about Jesus Christ. The kerygma consists in "the proclamation of Jesus Christ" (cf. Acts 3:42, 17:3), and thus of the victory of God's love over sin, death, and satan, through Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 8:31–39). Everything revolves around Christ's Passover. Other events of Jesus' life or of the history of salvation are always portrayed in relation to the mystery of Easter. At the centre of preaching is the crucified and risen Christ, his kingdom and God's salvation. Thus the proclamation of the kerygma is the proclamation of Jesus as the only and irreplaceable Savior living and working in the Church,⁶ and of His message that is contained in the books of the New Testament. Believers in

² CP no. 11.

³ E. M i s t e w i c z, *Marketing narracyjny. Jak budować historie, które sprzedają?*, Gliwice 2011, s. 39.

⁴ P. H i t z, *De Prediking in de Volksmissie part I*, „Ministerium Verbi” 8 (1954), s. 69–72.

⁵ M. K r ó l i k o w s k i, *Kerygmaticzny charakter przepowiadania jako odpowiedź na wezwanie do nowej ewangelizacji*, „Przegląd Homiletyczny” 5–6 (2001–2002), s. 61.

⁶ EiE no. 48.

Christ are preaching the Gospel as a narrative because the final word that God addresses to humanity is the story of Jesus, the Son of God.⁷ The apostles are witnesses of the public ministry of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection through which the salvation of the world has been accomplished. What they have seen, they told the people bringing the Gospel to all parts of the world. They used the narrative because they spoke about a person and a person can be only known by the hearers when somebody talks of him or her and reports the facts related to that person.⁸

The task of the apostles was to tell about *magnalia Dei*, or even shout to the whole world that God redeemed his people through Jesus Christ. The stories of the miraculous deeds of God in human history raise skepticism (cf. Acts 17:32), as well as produce sublime feelings and joy (cf. Acts 2:11). Whatever is the reaction of listeners, apostles always talk about what Christ – true God and man – has done for the happiness of people. The eternal salvation of human beings depends on the acceptance of the Gospel with faith according to the witness of those who have seen Jesus and His salvation's work. Since apostolic times the Christian faith is passed on from generation to generation in the form of stories.⁹ Christianity is a religion based on historical facts, and the followers of Christ form a community that tells stories. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived, taught and acted among men because the stories are the primary means of transmitting to the world the truth of the Gospel. Christianity is a story first, then theological reflection.

The apostles preached the Gospel, telling the story of Jesus. Their message was written by holy authors who captivated the Good News synthetically and explained adequately due to the existential situation of their recipients.¹⁰ The Gospel thus consists of fragments of biography and descriptions of the experience of those who met Christ. It isn't any set of catechetical definitions, but a story that can be told. It is a theology, or knowledge and teaching of God communicated in a narrative way.¹¹

The evangelizing activity of the Apostles isn't any sentimental story telling of some beautiful, ancient times which won't come back. This is a preaching of Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, and today and for ever (cf. Heb 13.8). Evangelization contains references to history, but doesn't finish with the past. Christ is risen and alive, so the contemporary man can meet him and experience the happiness that comes from faith in Him. And then he can tell other people about it.¹²

⁷ VD no. 11; E.J. S c h n a b e l, *Evangelisation im Neuen Testament*, in: H.H. K l e m e n t, *Evangelisation im Gegenwind. Zur Theologie und Praxis der Glaubensverkündigung in der säkularen Gesellschaft*, Gießen 2002, s. 39–40.

⁸ J. R a t z i n g e r, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Od chrztu w Jordanie do Przemienienia*, Kraków 2007, s. 150; P. H i t z, *L'annonce missionnaire de l'Évangile*, Paris 1954, s. 76; M. L ü t z, *Gott. Eine kleine Geschichte des Größten*, München 2009, s. 196–197.

⁹ H. W e i n r i c h, *Théologie narrative*, „Concilium” 5 (1973), s. 50; D. M c B r i d e, *The Parables of Jesus*, Leeds 1999, s. 17.

¹⁰ DV no. 19.

¹¹ P. H i t z, *L'annonce missionnaire de l'Évangile*, op. cit., s. 79; H.P. S i l l e r, *Das Evangelium in eigener Erfahrung sagen und in der Erfahrung anderer hören. Zum biographischen Erzählen des Zeugen*, in: R. Z e r f a ß, *Erzählter Glaube – erzählende Kirche*, Freiburg i. B. 1988, s. 166; A.C. R u e t e r, *Making Good Preaching Better*, Colledgeville 1997, s. 61.

¹² A. A m a t o, *Gesù Cristo*, in: M. S o d i, A. T r i a c c a, *Dizionario di omiletica*, Torino – Bergamo 1998, s. 610.

This work of the early Church is continued by evangelizers today who proclaim to the world that “in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God’s grace and mercy”.¹³ There isn’t a more important message than this: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you”.¹⁴ The central character of the kerygma in the Church’s proclamation doesn’t allow reducing the preaching of the Gospel to “a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical”.¹⁵ The proclamation of the kerygma takes a form of stories arousing the interest of the audience. The storytelling of the great God’s works fulfilled in human history is richer and more vibrant than the communication of doctrine extracted from the story. In addition, through the story of the death and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the mystery of redemption can more deeply touched the hearts and minds of the people who hear and adopt it.¹⁶

THE STRENGTH OF THE STORYTELLING

Understanding of the needs, desires and attitudes of its recipients plays an important role in the process of transmitting the Gospel. The first Christian heralds proclaiming salvation in Christ already knew about it, when talking about the great works of God, they tried to face all the basic needs of their listeners.¹⁷ Even today, stories are commonly used by producers, traders and politicians to make people aware of what blights them and what they cannot put under control alone. Then suggestions for the solution follow in the form of acquisition of a particular product or choice of a political option. So before anyone starts storytelling, he should recognize the desires and interests of the audience to be able to offer them assistance in satisfying their needs. Then the story goes straight to the heart, and thus not only gives an inspiration to think, but also moves the heart. Then an internal shock can happen in human life, and consequently a change in the perception of reality.¹⁸

The story moves listeners, but doesn’t enslave them.¹⁹ The purpose of evangelization is conversion, or changed human behavior, mentality and style of life. Conversion is always a free, personal decision to submit the own existence to the saving lordship of Christ and to enter into the community of his disciples.²⁰ Stories allow

¹³ EN no. 27.

¹⁴ EG no. 164.

¹⁵ EG no. 165.

¹⁶ F. M a r t i n, *The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me. The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Work of Evangelization*, in: S. B o g u s l a w s k i, R. M a r t i n, *The New Evangelization. Overcoming the Obstacles*, Mahwah 2008, s. 64; A. D u l l e s, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium*, New York 2009, s. 106.

¹⁷ E. G. H i n s o n, *The Evangelization of the Roman Empire. Identity and Adaptability*, Macon 1981, s. 27.

¹⁸ E. M i s t e w i c z, *Marketing narracyjny*, op. cit., s. 56.

¹⁹ F. K a m p h a u s, *Erzählend predigen*, „Lebendige Seelsorge” 6 (1977), s. 334.

²⁰ RMis no. 46; R. H a j d u k, *Nawrócenie jako cel działalności misyjnej redemptorystów*, „Studia Redemptorystowskie” 2 (2004), s. 214.

transmitting the divine truth in such a way that a individual doesn't feel attacked, so he doesn't have to take any defensive posture with concerns about the need to make some fundamental changes in their lives. People don't like to be instructed, but they are ever ready to listen to a story. Narrations communicate the truth and lead to confrontation, which doesn't happen directly.²¹ They constitute a medium that reveals the conflicts existing in reality and suggest in a non-directive way their solution. Then the relationship between the sender and the recipient can not be destroyed because the story allows the listener to look at the issue from a distance and to make such decisions what would be most appropriate.²²

The story is used by evangelizers to cause something to "happen" in the lives of listeners. In the stories lies a great performative strength: although the narrations don't demand or prescribe anything, however, the actions and attitudes of the characters appearing in it are so intertwined that the intention of the narrator eventually becomes clear, and the listeners can accept or oppose the purpose of the storyteller. Stories don't only transmit good advice, but they also allow their recipients to experience a sense of freedom and prompt them to do what the characters are doing – to become open to the action of God and to be ready to change their lives.²³

Stories play a diagnostic role: they help to better understand reality, unveil the opportunity to build new relationships and stimulate the creativity of listeners on the level of search for new existential solutions. Through the narrative, Christianity moves the human imagination which rises above all purely rational calculations. Narrated stories first appeal to the heart reducing the intellectual resistance to the truth of the Gospel. Their ductility sets free yearning for a new and better reality in the human heart, and their content can easily anchor in the human memory.²⁴

Stories used in the evangelization allow people to find and consolidate their identity. Narrations reinforce their sense of belonging to the community of believers, which has a longer history than the time of their lives. In the narrated stories, people recognize what shaped their current status and character. Retelling of an ancient story helps people to recognize who they are and who they could be. In this way, they become more fully aware of their vocations and find their way through life – a way which is determined by the God alone.²⁵

²¹ R. H a j d u k, *Bóg lubi opowiadania... (i słuchacze kazań też!)*, „Revertimini ad fontes” 1 (1994), s. 82.

²² R. H a j d u k, *Leczyć rany serc złamanych. Przyczynek do kaznodziejstwa terapeutycznego*, Kraków 1996, s. 168.

²³ A. G r ö z i n g e r, *Die Sprache des Menschen*, München 1991, s. 164; E. A r e n s, „*Wer kann die großen Taten des Herrn erzählen?*” (Ps 106,2). *Die Erzählstruktur christlichen Glaubens in systematischer Perspektive*, in: R. Z e r f a ß, *Erzählter Glaube – erzählende Kirche*, op. cit., s. 24.

²⁴ D. V. T o m e y, *The End of Irish Catholicism?*, Dublin 2003, s. 65–66; L. W a c h i n g e r, „*Der Mensch ist ein Geschichtenerzähler*” (S. Minouchin). *Zur therapeutischen Funktion des Erzählens*, in: R. Z e r f a ß, *Erzählter Glaube – erzählende Kirche*, op. cit., s. 136; M. M. P r z y b y s z, *Narracja, która się sprzedaje, czyli opowieść o narracji w reklamie*, in: G. H a b r a j s k a, *Komunikatywizm w Polsce. Wybrane zagadnienia z teorii i praktyki*, Łódź 2011, s. 170.

²⁵ E. L y o n s, *Partnership in Parish*, Dublin 1993, s. 99.

Stories showing the work of God, who transforms the lives of people, allow the recipients of evangelization to look in a specific way at themselves and the world they live in. Narrations teach people to perceive the world and their life through God's eyes. Through stories showing God's reference to human reality, people don't only convince themselves how much God loves this world, but they also reveal the deeper meaning of what is happening. The stories discovering the truth of the existence of the world in the light of faith support people in the process of liberation from alienation in reality. Narrated events from the past help them find their place in the present. Their lives are becoming meaningful and more valuable in their eyes.²⁶

The story told by another person can simplify contact. Stories serve to create and strengthen ties between the evangelizers and recipients of the Gospel. Stories engage their listeners who perceive them as a part of their history. Through narratives, which are the primary means of verbalization of human experience, a sense of closeness among persons appears and a community of people participating in the same experience arises. When someone puts to somebody a question of who he is or what he has experienced, he naturally starts telling story of his personal life. In this way the narrative contributes to building unity and solidarity among the people.²⁷

THE RULES OF THE NARRATIVE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

People live through stories. Listening and storytelling allows them to systematize and describe their experience.²⁸ Christians are people who know the story of God's salvation and for two thousand years they have been communicating it to the world. In this way, the message of the redemption in Jesus Christ reaches all generations. So the Gospel will remain the news *par excellence* to the end of time. The uniqueness of the Christian message demands a concern for its transmission. This is the reason to formulate certain rules relating to the narrative proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

1. Telling of true stories

Evangelization is the proclamation of the truth of Christ that "makes things happen and is life-changing".²⁹ Only true stories can convince people to change their attitudes. Therefore, evangelization should beware of bogus history. The evangelizers

²⁶ LF no. 18; H. F i s c h e r, *Gegenwärtiges Erzählen als Weltdeutung durch Glauben*, „Theologie der Gegenwart” 3 (1994), s. 194; D. M c B r i d e, *The Parables of Jesus*, op. cit., s. 17.

²⁷ P. B a l l a r d, J. P r i c h a r d, *Practical Theology in Action. Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society*, London 2006; s. 67; M. D a h l é n, F. L a n g e, T. S m i t h, *Marketing Communications. A Brand Narrative Approach*, West Sussex 2010, s. 397.

²⁸ Ch.L. R i c e, *A More-or-less Historical Account of the Fairly Recent History of the Narrative Preaching*, in: M. G r a v e s, D.J. S c h l a f e r, *What's the Shape of Narrative Preaching*, Danvers 2008, s. 8.

²⁹ SpS no. 2.

don't need to fantasize and invent stories, because there is enough in the real stories showing the action of God towards men. Whoever fabricates preaching the message of salvation runs the risk of losing credibility and exposes himself to ridicule.³⁰

To tell true stories, the evangelizers should just go back to the Bible. Jesus left his followers a pattern of communicating truth in a simple and pictorial language, in a form of parables.³¹ Although the situations presented in them wouldn't have to happen, these are the true stories, because Jesus shows in such a way who is God the Father, how He is acting in the world and what He expects from people. The Bible stories show people how they can shape their future attitude. These stories allow their recipients to discover the true meaning of life. This happens when the Bible stories are compiled and compared with contemporary stories of individuals and entire societies.³²

The evangelizers find true stories in the literature, historical sources and personal memories of people encountered by them in everyday life.³³ The preachers of the Good News should also reach to their own memory which contains significant scenes and events of their own past. Speaking of ordinary human life in which the presence of God can be perceived in the light of faith, the evangelizers teach their audience the „reading of events” in which they will be able to recognize the signs of God's action in their ordinary reality. Every story transmitting the experience of God to the audience is a genuine profession of faith that moves the recipients to make a confrontation with his own view of reality and to take their own position in her.³⁴

2. Thematization of human needs and desires

Evangelization should begin with the discovery of the needs of contemporary people, their joys and hopes, concerns and issues lying in their hearts.³⁵ Only then can the evangelizers talk about the love of God, referring their message directly to the problems and situations that are relevant to the existence of individuals and mankind. They should let the audience feel that the deepest human needs and desires can be satisfied by what the speaker is recommending. For when the people hear the Gospel, they are asking themselves: “What's in it for me?” And it doesn't matter about any selfish desires at all. Every day people are moved by a call to achieve greatness. Every day they are called to make a self sacrifice, to promote social jus-

³⁰ P. B u k o w s k i, *Predigt wahrnehmen*, Neukirchen – Vluyn 1990, s. 114.

³¹ W. U r a n g a, *Comunicación, Iglesia y sociedad. Visión socio-eclesiológica de la comunicación*, in: G. R a v a s i, J. M c D o n n e l l, W. U r a n g a, *Evangelización y Comunicación*, Caracas 1994, s. 163.

³² O. F u c h s, *Praktische Hermeneutik der Heiligen Schrift*, Stuttgart 2004, s. 144–145.

³³ P. B u k o w s k i, *Predigt wahrnehmen*, op. cit., s. 114; R. H a j d u k, *Ewangelia na forum świata. Od apologetyki do marketingu narracyjnego*, Kraków 2013, s. 235.

³⁴ R. H a j d u k, *Leczyć rany serc złamanych*, op. cit., s. 166; J. M ü l l e r, *Mit Geschichten Leben und Glauben erschließen*, „Lebendige Katechese” 1 (1994), s. 38; O. F u c h s, *Narrativität und Widerspenstigkeit. Strukturanalogien zwischen biblischen Geschichten und christlichen Handeln*, in: R. Z e r f a ß, *Erzählter Glaube – erzählende Kirche*, op. cit., s. 93.

³⁵ EG no. 128.

tice, to be compassionate with sufferings and to contribute to the advancement of the common good.³⁶ Telling people about God, coming in to meet their deepest problems and desires, the evangelizers follow Jesus, who spoke in parables to help people to live here and now and to find an answer to their existential dilemmas.³⁷

Stories are the best way of explaining reality.³⁸ They allow the listeners to look at their situation in a new light and suggest a solution for the concerns of their questions and problems. Their needs must be in the stories of evangelizers who should forget in a measure about themselves and fill their thoughts with the interests, preferences and patterns typical of modern societies. Obviously, timeless dilemmas faced by all generations: the meaning of death and suffering, fear of destruction and transience, the question of happiness and about what awaits man after death, etc. can not fail to be answered in the evangelizing stories. Their content should also awaken new desires and give impetus to ask ourselves deeper questions about the spiritual life and comprehensive personal development.³⁹

3. Respect for human freedom

Any proclamation of the Gospel must touch moral issues; otherwise it wouldn't be able to answer to the needs of the audience.⁴⁰ But the evangelizers can not reduce the evangelization to giving people good advice. Preaching the Gospel doesn't mean moralizing. Proclaiming the Good News about Jesus Christ cannot become analyzing or proposing moral decisions, but it creates a climate in which appropriate decisions can be taken. This climate is created by the story of God's action in Jesus Christ and by showing examples of good practice. Then the auditors can see themselves and their own lives in the light of the evangelical truth. Despite the passage of centuries, Jesus and his way of telling the parable is still a model for today's evangelizers. On the one hand, Jesus tells the audience about the well-known facts, and on the other hand, he presents them situations and proposes solutions to conflicts having nothing to do with their stereotypical notions about life and the world. The stories of Jesus are not ethically neutral. They show a specific model of conduct suggesting to the audience what is good to do in a determined situation.⁴¹ Such a telling model of life lets the recipients discover imperatives of the Christian ethic which always are referred to the theological indicative of salvation history.⁴²

³⁶ A.C. Rueter, *Making Good Preaching Better*, op. cit., s. 28.

³⁷ R. Hajduk, *Mit Jesus auf dem Weg in die Praxis der Gottesherrschaft. Evangelium, kommunikatives Handeln und Moralverkündigung*, „Studia Moralia” 1 (1998), s. 194.

³⁸ R. Hajduk, *O gloszeniu Ewangelii i marketingu narracyjnym*, *SW* 49 (2012), s. 153.

³⁹ M. Moser, *Einander vom Glauben erzählen. Gemeindekatechese, „Lebendige Katechese”* 1 (1994), s. 44.

⁴⁰ D.C. Ford, *The Place of Ethics in Preaching*, in: G. Hunter, G. Thomas, S. Wright, *Preacher's Companion. Essays from the College of Preachers*, Oxford 2004, s. 60.

⁴¹ B. Sill, „Sinn für die mögliche Wirklichkeit” (R. Musil). *Ars narrandi und ethische Predigt*, in: R. Zerfaß, *Erzählter Glaube – erzählende Kirche*, op. cit., s. 157.

⁴² E. Zenger, *Erfahrung – Weisheit – Weisung. Zur Struktur biblisch-appellativer Texte*, in: F. Kamphaus, R. Zerfaß, *Ethische Predigt und Alltagsverhalten*, Mainz 1977, s. 40; J. Gniska, *Jesus von Nazaret. Botschaft und Geschichte*, Freiburg i. B. 1993, s. 87.

The stories of God's intervention in human reality, modeled on the parables of Jesus, don't impose anything, but give their listeners freedom in making decisions. So the evangelization becomes free from pretense bringing people to faith through some wicked ways and from the suspicion of performing indoctrination.⁴³ Then the parenthesis has nothing more to do with enslaving human consciences, but it discloses in the horizon of the kingdom of God the possibility to leave the "old style" of life, it means: the possibility of repentance (cf. Mark 1:14). The proclamation of moral truths doesn't begin with the presentation of a code of behavior's principles, but with the proclamation of the Good News of a loving God who gives people a chance to transform their lives. Telling the story of the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, the evangelizers don't demand or prescribe anything, but they only try in a gentle, almost imperceptible way to inspire people to change mentality and attitude. The contemporary heralds of the Good News present also the life of today's people, their relationships and the events taking place in their everyday life. In such a way, a mirror appears before the listeners in which they can see their own existence. Then everybody can decide whether to accept the Christian view of reality or reject it.

4. Interesting and clear storyline

To make the recipients fascinated by the characters of the story and to help them to identify themselves with the presented persons, the storytellers should focus on a few characters, revealing their activities in a transparent and uncomplicated way.⁴⁴ The biblical authors had the same purpose, not only to inform in their stories what God once did, but encourage readers and listeners most of all to reconstruct once again narrated reality, using their own imagination. The Bible stories contain a number of "gaps" that can be filled by human fantasy. At the same time, however, they provide a sufficient number of tips to prevent a distortion of the biblical events and formulation of some false conclusions.⁴⁵ The biblical stories give voice to the dramatic nature of faith. God is looking for men and intervenes in their history, and people are looking for God. In such stories, the authors allow their characters to act and talk to each other, while remaining completely outside the described events. They report from a distance on what is going on, refraining from evaluations and explanations. Thus they give the recipients an opportunity to reach out to his memories and his own prospects in order to respond personally to the content presented to them. It especially touches their faith which also is an individual story of their encounters with God. Their personal journey with God through the world becomes live and receives new inspirations through the stories moving heart, memory, conscience and fantasy.

⁴³ E. A r e n s, „*Wer kann die großen Taten des Herrn erzählen?*“ (Ps 106,2), op. cit., s. 24; O. F u c h s, *Praktische Hermeneutik der Heiligen Schrift*, op. cit., s. 178.

⁴⁴ R. H a j d u k, *Leczyć rany serc złamanych*, op. cit., s. 169.

⁴⁵ A. O h l e r, *Wie das Alte Testament von Gottes Taten erzählt*, „*Lebendige Katechese*“ 1 (1994), s. 9.

The biblical stories give people an opportunity to immerse themselves in a different reality. Whoever is fascinated with a story and can empathize into its characters and their situation, he leaves the everyday stereotypes surrounding him, revives his faith and gets a new source of religious experience. The stories enable him to enter into a process of uncovering previously unknown dimensions of reality (“disclosure”). It happens when the auditor suddenly realizes that what the Gospel says applies to his daily life. The same thing happens when the listener, looking at their own situation, suddenly finds God, or a new way of looking at himself. The experience of “disclosure” may also arise in the person who listening to the stories of the Bible, discovers that the issues raised in them concern not only himself, but also all other people.⁴⁶

The evangelization has a place for both the biblical stories and personal testimonies – the contemporary stories speaking of friendship between God and people and of human difficulties overcome through faith.⁴⁷ Such stories make possible so that the listeners can internally participate in unfolding events, to empathize with the situation of individual characters and to identify with them. Identifying with the presented persons in the story, the recipients “experience the Gospel with the whole entity”. In this way, the Gospel tends to become “incarnated” in other human biographies.⁴⁸

5. Concise and direct style of storytelling

Stories often act as “carriers” of reasons, becoming the tool of gentle persuasion.⁴⁹ Using stories, the evangelizers resign from concepts and describe events in a lively and vivid course so the auditors can follow the occurrences with commitment. The stories used in evangelization “liberate” the theological truth from their abstract forms and “locate” it in a certain time and space. In this way, a language of the experience begins to dominate in evangelization. It is free from the abstract notions and becomes colourful and full of words and phrases used in everyday life.⁵⁰

People most often use stories in their daily interpersonal communication. It means that every person is able to tell stories. Therefore, the evangelizers don’t have to invent some fancy designs, but they can “tell” the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ as they use the stories in their ordinary relationships. Then the narrative is accompanied by the passion and joy of the storytellers who can share with others something that is for them especially important.

⁴⁶ H. A r e n s, F. R i c h a r d t, J. S c h u l t e, *Kreativität und Predigtarbeit*, München 1974, s. 16–17.

⁴⁷ EG no. 128.

⁴⁸ K. M e y e r z u U p t r u p, *Gestalthomiletik. Wie wir heute predigen können*, Stuttgart 1986, s. 141–142; G. B i t t e r, *Erzähler als Kundschafter des Glaubens*, „Lebendige Katechese” 1 (1994), s. 29.

⁴⁹ W. E n g e m a n n, *Einführung in die Homiletik*, Tübingen 2002, s. 310; R. H a j d u k, *O głoszeniu Ewangelii i marketingu narracyjnym*, op. cit., s. 154.

⁵⁰ R. Z e r f a s s, *Grundkurs Predigt I. Spruchpredigt*, Düsseldorf 1992, s. 149; R. H a j d u k, *Posłani głosić dobrą nowinę. Podstawowy kurs homiletyczny*, Kraków 2007, s. 160–162.

The story should be short, clear and convincing.⁵¹ One clearly defined topic makes it easier to receive the message transmitted through the narrative. Because of it the “Gospel-tellers” should focus on several characters of the story and their activities to not unduly complicate the action. As the narration has to show the continuity of events, the evangelizers should abundantly use verbs avoiding nouns and sparingly use adjectives. They should prefer the present tense as the best time in narrative. Sentences should be short and connected by conjunctions.⁵²

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The modern world seems to appreciate narratives, recognizing their ability to influence people not only in the commercial and political marketing, but also their role in shaping the culture and in building of national consciousness. Since the first years of Christianity the disciples of Jesus have known the power of the impact of the stories. From the beginning, Christians reinforced the faith and strengthened their unity in the Church telling the story of salvation. That’s why today the proclamation of the Gospel in the form of narrations is still needed. The place for a narrative way of transmitting the Good News is not only in the churches where the preachers proclaim the Christian message at the pulpit. The evangelizers can also tell the story of salvation in Jesus Christ in the mass media, in the schools or during street evangelization. The story also has its place in direct evangelization when the interpersonal relationship creates a space in which a person before the other bears witness to their faith, sharing with their neighbour the experience of God’s love.

Believers in Christ recognize the fact that the Good News of the saving work of God’s love can not be left to them. Therefore, as long as there are people in the world the most important story will not disappear from the face of the globe – the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (cf. Mark 1:1). Contrary to postmodern rejection of “grand stories” (meta-narratives) explaining the sense of reality and human existence, the Gospel is still preached and is of interest. The Christian Good News still brings hope to people who, in spite of scientific and technical progress, are constantly struggling with diseases, violence, poverty and social injustice. Therefore, the evangelizers continually have an urgent task to fulfill and spread throughout the earth the “greatest narrative” of God’s work of salvation and also tell others their own “small” personal stories demonstrating the power of God among people here and now.

⁵¹ T. S ö d i n g, *Verkündigung als Erzählung*, „Lebendige Katechese” 1 (1994), s. 15.

⁵² P. B u k o w s k i, *Predigt wahrnehmen*, op. cit., s. 124; R. H a j d u k, *Postani glosić dobraq nowineq*, op. cit., s. 186–187.

NARRACYJNOŚĆ I EWANGELIZACJA

STRESZCZENIE

Ewangelizować to głosić Jezusa Chrystusa, czyli opowiadać ludziom historię odwiecznego słowa Ojca, które stało się ciałem i odtąd przenika dzieje ludzkości. Chrześcijanie głoszą Ewangelię przy pomocy opowieści, gdyż ostatecznym słowem, jakie Bóg kieruje do ludzkości, jest historia Jezusa, Syna Bożego. W opowieściach tkwi wielka siła performacyjna: chociaż niczego się nie domagają ani nie nakazują, to jednak skłaniają swych adresatów, by zastanowili się nad sobą i swoimi postawami, a następnie otworzyli się na działanie Boga i zmienili swoje życie. Opowiadana światu Dobra Nowina o zbawieniu w Jezusie Chrystusie poruszy słuchaczy, gdy przekazywane ludziom historie będą prawdziwe oraz stanowić będą odpowiedź na najgłębsze ludzkie potrzeby. Ewangelizatorzy winni opowiadać o zbawczej miłości Boga w sposób jasny i interesujący, respektując ludzką wolność przy podejmowaniu decyzji za lub przeciw Chrystusowi. Tego rodzaju proklamacja Ewangelii daje gwarancję, iż orędzie chrześcijańskie będzie słuchane i przyjęte przez ludzi całą duszą (por. EN 23).

NARRATIVITÄT UND EVANGELISATION

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Evangelisieren heißt: verkünden den Menschen Jesus Christus. Es besteht also im Erzählen der Geschichte vom ewigen Wort des himmlischen Vaters, das Fleisch geworden ist und von diesem Zeitpunkt an die Geschichte der Menschheit durchdringt. Christen verkünden das Evangelium mittels der Erzählungen, denn das letzte Wort, das Gott an die Menschheit richtet, ist die Geschichte von Jesus, dem Sohn Gottes. In den durch die Evangelisatoren verwendeten Erzählungen ist eine große performative Kraft verborgen: obwohl sie weder etwas verlangen noch vorschreiben, bewegen jedoch ihre Empfänger dazu, über ihr Leben und ihre Einstellungen nachzudenken und sich im Endeffekt auf die Wirkung von Gott zu öffnen und ihr Leben zu verändern. Die der Welt erzählte die Frohe Botschaft vom Heil in Jesus Christus löst bei den Hörern Betroffenheit aus, wenn die den Menschen vermittelten Geschichten authentisch sind und auf die tiefsten menschlichen Bedürfnisse Antwort geben. Die Evangelisatoren müssen von der erlösenden Liebe Gottes klar und interessant erzählen und in ihrer Verkündigung die Freiheit des Menschen respektieren. Eine in diesem Stil vollzogene Evangelisierung eröffnet die Chance, dass die christliche Botschaft gehört und von den Menschen akzeptiert wird (vgl. EN 23).