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Liturgy and Morality. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in the Context of Moral Theology

The fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* by the Second Vatican Council (4 December 1963) is a great opportunity to analyse the relation between liturgy and morality. Their mutual ties, confirmed by the Divine Revelation, are one of the foundations of the existence of Christians and the Church. According to H. U. von Balthasar, the conjunction between liturgy and morality is the very fragment of the Revelation which reveals its fullness; this fullness flows and radiates through fragments, which is made easier and more natural when the fragments themselves are aware of their own incomplete character¹. Through the Revelation infinite God gives Himself to man in the fragments comprehensible for him in his human perception.

However, there is a risk of fragmentation of this infinite Whole in the Christian reflection and Christian works. The risk concerns the co-relation between liturgy and morality as well, being the distinction between the theoretical and the practical approach towards the two, up to the point when the two concepts become separated, or even contradicted, which, as a result, make the full and authentic participation in the Theo-Drama² in

¹ Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Das Ganze im Fragment*, Einsiedeln 1963, p. 122.

² Reference to the concept of H. U. von Balthasar presented in the five volumes of his *Theodramatik (Theo-Drama)* published by Johannes Verlag in Einsiedeln between 1973 and 1983.

which God co-operates with man impossible. That is when both liturgy and morality are in danger of becoming mere parodies of their original concepts.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* published in 1992, the Revelation indicates that the faith professed in the *Creed* is celebrated in the liturgy and then attested by the moral deeds of a Christian and supported by individual and communal prayer. In this way, the Catholic hermeneutics of the Divine Revelation is a true image of Christian existence as defined by Paul: it is “only faith working through love” (Gal 5:6). It means that orthopraxy does not exist without orthodoxy, and vice versa. However, R. Guardini points out that the Catholic understanding of this co-relation emphasises “the primacy of the Logos over the Ethos, and by this, harmony with the established and immutable laws of all existence”³, as its source is God who creates, makes the covenant with people, redeems and saves. Only then can man respond to God’s gifts with his own moral and liturgical acts.

All these elements help to shape some logical aspect of the interpretation of the connection between liturgy and morality in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in the context of moral theology. The starting point must be the analysis of the Revelation data, which the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy considers to be crucial for determining the essence of the Catholic liturgy. The next step to be taken is the interpretation of two key liturgical categories, namely “active participation” and “sacrifice”, which show the correlation between liturgy and morality. The article finishes with an attempt to formulate a few basic conclusions connected with the issue in question.

1. Revelation Data

One of the characteristics of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, chronologically the first document of *Vaticanum II*, is its pastoral aim, namely the “restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy”, realised by describing liturgy in the context of the history of salvation. It means that the right approach to determining the essence of Christian liturgy ought to

³ R. Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, transl. Ada Lane, New York 1935.

originate from the history of salvation. Therefore, the nature of liturgy is seen in the subsequent stages of God's plan of salvation as indicated in the Constitution: "the wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament" (SC 5), "the work of salvation" accomplished by Christ, the acts of the Church, in which Christ is always present (SC 6–7) as well as the eschatological future of the "heavenly liturgy" (SC 8). In order to analyse the issue in question, we need to scrutinise the God – man – community relations, basing the analysis on the biblical data available.

In the Old Testament the exodus, essential for the Chosen People, culminates through the covenant on Sinai (Ex 19 and 20), in which three interrelated elements are determined: worship, law and ethos. According to J. Ratzinger, "on Sinai the people receive not only instructions about worship, but also an all-embracing rule of law and life. [...] A people without a common rule of law cannot live. It destroys itself in anarchy, which is a parody of freedom, its exaltation to the point of abolition. When every man lives without law, every man lives without freedom"⁴. It means that the Sinaitic Covenant is not restricted to the "liturgical acts" understood as a number of practices minutely described by the Torah (e.g. Lev 1: 1–5: 26; 6: 1–7: 38)⁵. "Liturgy" of the Old Covenant is co-defined by the Ten Commandments, as it refers to man understood in a relational way. The reference to God, neighbours and yourself has a moral dimension, regulated by the hierarchically organised set of pro-scriptions and commandments, determining the responsibilities of the Chosen People (deontological interpretation). However, it is possible and desirable to interpret the Ten Commandments as a set of values and laws which constitute genuinely human, personal and social order. It consists of the so-called "vertical values" referring to the relationship between God and man: the worship of the Absolute, the respect for its presence in the world (the "name" of God) and the sacral dimension of time, as well as the so-called "horizontal values", which determine the morality of human relations. Among them we can find: family, life, the unity of a married

⁴ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, transl. J. Saward, San Francisco 2000, p. 18.

⁵ More on the sacrificial ritual in: T. Brzegowy, *Pięcioksiąg Mojżesza. Wprowadzenie i egzegeza księgi Rodzaju 1–11*, Tarnów 1997, p. 87–91.

couple, freedom and dignity of all men, material possessions⁶. Following those values, regulations and commandments is seen as an equal criterion of the worship relation to God and His Covenant.

This event, which is the foundation of the Chosen People in the theological sense, establishes the co-relation between liturgy and morality, which is anything but random. It is well depicted by the story of the “golden calf” (Ex 32), which, according to J. Ratzinger, symbolises seeing God as equal to man, which poses a threat to the Covenant and suggests subjecting Him to the autonomous rule of man. “The narrative of the golden calf is a warning about any kind of self-initiated and self-seeking worship. Ultimately, it is no longer concerned with God but with giving oneself a nice little alternative world, manufactured from one’s own resources. Then liturgy really does become pointless, just fooling around. Or still worse it becomes an apostasy from the living God, an apostasy in sacral disguise. All that is left in the end is frustration, a feeling of emptiness. There is no experience of that liberation which always takes place when man encounters the living God”⁷.

In this context, liturgy, being a theandric act, can be perceived in the context of dramatic anthropology, since historical human existence is a moral drama, and therefore a complication, tension, catastrophe or reconciliation⁸. There is always some anthropological risk of misinterpretation of a theophany, and there is a risk of liturgically-moral misbehaviour that results from it. There are many historical narratives in the Old Testament that depict such situations (e.g. 1 Kings 11 : 4–13; 18 : 20–40).

The reaction to this is the Old Testament prophetism. “The prophetic literature first linked divine worship with respect for rights and justice. The preaching of Amos (5 : 21) and Isaiah (1 : 10–20) particularly are typical of this theological intuition.”⁹. We need to, however, differen-

⁶ Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality. Biblical Roots of Christian Conduct*, no. 30–31.

⁷ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 23.

⁸ Cf. H. U. von Balthasar, *Teodramatyka*, vol. 1: *Prolegomena*, tłum. M. Mijalska, M. Radkiewicz, W. Szymona, Kraków 2005, p. 17.

⁹ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality*, op. cit., no. 35.

tiating between two main tendencies. The first one, characteristic of the so-called early prophets from before the exile (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum and Habakkuk) is the criticism of syncretic worship, magically-sensual, external, separated from the morality demanded by Yahweh. Amos comments on it clearly: "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; Then truly will the LORD, the God of hosts, be with you as you claim" (Am 5: 14). The evil is seen as tangible social, economical and political injustice towards the weak (e.g. proselytes, orphans or widows)¹⁰. The prophets oppose to religion which is at the service of politics, which becomes the ideology of the state and its elites, as well as their subordinate priests (cf. e.g. Hos 4: 4–8), the result of which is always a personal and social sin¹¹.

The second tendency visible in the Old Testament prophecies introduces us to the problem of eschatological issues. In the writings of both Jeremiah (31: 31–34) and Ezekiel (11; 36) the new covenant is announced. The covenant which is presented as the utter gift of God, given regardless of the historical unfaithfulness of man and community. Deutero-Isaiah (40–55) announces the promise of the eternal and ultimate covenant. Zechariah additionally presents the vision of purification, which can be hastened by morally good actions of men (8: 14–17 cf. also Mal 3: 1–3), and Malachi pronounces the prophecy of the perfect, universal offering (Mal 1: 11). However, the coming of the era of salvation is more and more often connected with the so-called messianic promises (e.g. Jer 23: 5n; Ezek 17: 22–24; Hag 2: 20–23; Zech 6: 9–15), which, with time, concentrate in one person – the "Servant of Yahweh" (Isa 42; 49; 50: 4–11; 52: 13–53: 1–12), the "Son of Man" (Dan 7)¹², and the "meek and just" King (Zech 9: 9–10).

We can therefore form a thesis that the eschatological perspective of the prophets sees the liturgical (sacrificial) and moral actions of the Old

¹⁰ Cf. S. Bastianel, L. Di Pinto, *Biblijne podstawy etyki*, tłum. S. Obirek, Kraków 1994, p. 55–58.

¹¹ Cf. T. Hergesel, *Rozumieć Biblię*, vol. 1: *Stary Testament. Jahwizm*, Kraków 1990, p. 316–323.

¹² Cf. S. Bastianel, L. Di Pinto, *Biblijne podstawy etyki*, op. cit., p. 65–72.

Testament man in an anthropologically relative way. For Salvation requires faith in the actions of God in the past and present, but, most importantly, in the future. According to G. von Rad, the prophetic eschatology boils down to proclaiming to Israel the new works of God in history, which will go far beyond the old promises and the events overlooked and rejected by the Chosen Nation¹³. The announcement of this unknown dimension of the works of God can be also interpreted with reference to the mutual relation between liturgy and morality.

The New Testament fulfils what the Old Testament announces, and means a direct connection of God and the life of man. According to J. Ratzinger, the oneness of both Testaments means the “three steps of shadow, image, and reality”¹⁴. In Jesus Christ eschatology connects with history, although it does not identify itself with it. As far as the topic of this article is concerned, the most important thesis is that the life of Christ is both action and worship¹⁵. That is why He is perceived as a “universal formal norm of moral conduct” and a “specific personal norm” for both liturgy and morality of the New Covenant. On the one hand, the salvific work of Christ is a historical event of Passion, Death and Resurrection; on the other hand, there is its liturgical celebration in the Eucharist and in other sacraments in the time of the Church which “already” refers to the eternity of God, but is “not yet” there. The salvific work of Jesus takes place at a particular time in history and happens “once for all” (Lat. *semel*, Gr. *ephapax*; cf.: e.g. Heb 9 : 12; 10 : 12). But, as J. Ratzinger concludes, “what is perpetual takes place in what happens only once”¹⁶, it is everlasting. It happens “for us” and “because of us”. Therefore, a Christian sees liturgy in three ways: as a constituting event, a liturgical act, and a personal incorporation of Christ. “His self-giving is meant to become mine, so that I become contemporary with the Pasch of Christ and assimilated unto

¹³ Cf. G. von Rad, *Teologia Starego Testamentu*, tłum. B. Widła, Warszawa 1980, p. 455.

¹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁵ Cf. Międzynarodowa Komisja Teologiczna, *Moralność chrześcijańska i jej normy*, [in:] *Od wiary do teologii. Dokumenty Międzynarodowej Komisji Teologicznej 1969–1996*, red. J. Królikowski, Kraków 2000, p. 34.

¹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 56.

God”¹⁷. It is this third dimension of liturgy that “expresses its moral demand”¹⁸ and it refers to the preceding works of God, made present in the liturgy, in order to make His descent our ascension, also through liturgy and morality. M. Kunzler suggests that God’s descent (katabatic/redemptive aspect) makes human ascension possible (anabatic, or latreutic aspect of liturgy) through worship and celebration¹⁹.

It all forms the new shape of the co-relation between liturgy and morality. Liturgy makes it possible for man to “ascend to God”, which is also full of moral sense. In other words, the revealed morality is “not primarily the human response but a revelation of the God’s purpose and of the divine gift. [...] for the Bible, morality is the consequence of the experience of God”²⁰. We can therefore conclude that the “Law” in the liturgically-moral sense, which in the New Covenant is Christ Himself, is what we may call “a way to follow”²¹ in Christ. This statement finds its evangelical foundation in the words of Jesus: “I am the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6).

This is the synthesis of the New Testament teaching concerning the co-relation between liturgy and morality, which we learn to understand by means of theological analysis. St. Paul expresses it in the most concise way when he mentions *logike latreia* (Rom 12:1): “I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, **your spiritual worship**”. According to J. Ratzinger the notion of *logike lateria* must be regarded as “the most appropriate way of expressing the essential form of Christian liturgy”, as it is how “the logos of creation, the logos in man, and the true and eternal Logos made flesh, the Son, come together”²².

In this approach we can notice the original, New Testament combination of faith, liturgy and morality, as well as the co-relative forms of

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 58.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 59.

¹⁹ Cf. M. Kunzler, *Liturgia Kościoła*, tłum. L. Balter, Poznań 1999, p. 11.

²⁰ Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality*, op. cit., no. 4.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 50.

evangelisation, namely the kerygma, liturgy and parenthesis. As J. Corbon emphasises, the New Covenant takes us beyond the division between worship and moral life²³. It is an apt interpretation of the Pauline *logike latreia*, worshipping God “in Spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23–24). The truth of God and the truth of man, the moral sense of which is expressed in *agape*. Christ is the incarnation of this love, and man was called to it through imitating the Logos through *metanoia*, the personal conversion.

Therefore, if liturgy makes the Incarnate Word present, one of the conditions to make this presence real is accepting His every word in its full religious and moral sense. Indicatively-imperative character of the teaching of Christ is inseparable from His work in the liturgical celebration of the Church. The calling which initiated His own mission: “Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15), “Come after me” (Mt 4:19), the Sermon on the Mount and the interpretation of the Ten Commandments, as well as the detailed indications concerning the relation to God, one’s neighbours and oneself, they all clarify the moral conditions of authentic celebration.

Biblical data, interpreted with the oneness of both Testaments in mind, present the multi-dimensional relation between liturgy and morality. It opens the next stage of our presentation of this co-relation in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council.

2. Religiously-moral sense of *participatio actuosa*: the offering

Understanding one of the crucial statements from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy seems easier in the light of the data analysed. The Constitution states that: “Before men can come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and to conversion” (SC 9). The Christian relation God – man – community requires a theologically motivated moral conversion, which can be referred to as the “life by faith” (cf. Heb 10:38), since,

²³ Cf. J. Corbon, *Liturgia. Źródło wody życia*, tłum. A. Foltańska, Poznań 2005, p. 193.

as indicated by the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, “the sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church” (SC 9).

Therefore, it is important to make sure that “the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects” (*participatio actuosa*; SC 11), which emphasises the importance of the earlier mentioned religiously-moral sense of the celebration, and suggests only secondary meaning of the external correctness, which encloses in respecting the liturgical forms, detailed regulations and cultural elements etc. Contradicting these two elements of active participation would be a mistake with regard to the Bible, Tradition and the teachings of the Church. According to J. Ratzinger “active participation in liturgical celebrations”, which is an important notion in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, by no means can be reduced to its formal dimension. He claims that some pragmatists of the liturgical reform thought that all parts of the liturgy needed to be recited aloud by all its participants, which would make the celebration attractive and effective. However, in Ratzinger’s opinion, it is the *sense* of the words uttered and understanding them that constitutes one of the elements of the aforementioned *participatio actuosa*. The *actio* does not consist in standing up, sitting and kneeling down, but, most importantly, in the internal processes taking place, which make the celebration itself a dramatically important event²⁴.

His comments have their justification in biblical anthropology. The fact they come in compliance with it is the main methodological criterion of moral reflection²⁵, which comes prior to the conscious and free works of man as a religiously-moral subject. A human being, as “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1 : 15) is a spiritually-corporal creation, in which the spirit determines its humanity. One of its crucial dimensions is a rational and unconstrained relation to good. That is the moral implication of the revealed fact of creation, as well as the historical forms of the covenant, which include specific definitions of good. It is therefore the

²⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Liturgia zmienna czy niezmienna? Pytania do Josepha Ratzingera*, [in:] idem, *Opera omnia*, vol. XI: *Teologia liturgii. Sakramentalne podstawy życia chrześcijańskiego*, red. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, tłum. W. Szymona, Lublin 2012, p. 583.

²⁵ Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Bible and Morality*, op. cit., no. 95.

inside of a human being that holds the moral sense and is a condition of the authenticity of his actions.

On the other hand, the second methodological criterion of moral reflection points to the Christian sense of spirituality, which consists in aiming at perfection through the imitation of Christ, who is “the model par excellence of perfect conduct”²⁶. The most important issue here is acting in accordance with the values of the Gospel, the synthesis of which are the beatitudes. Their radicalism expresses and realises the filial relation of Jesus to the Father. Reconciliation, forgiveness and unconditional love take up a central position in this relation. The morality in imitating Jesus Christ, the self-portrait of whom are the beatitudes²⁷, makes the communion with the Lord, who works in the liturgy of the Church, possible.

The moral dimension of the liturgical *participatio actuosa* may be referred to as the Christian existential hermeneutic circle. Imitating Christ gives us the ability to access liturgy more deeply, which lets us derive from its teachings, which, through God’s grace, makes gradual conversion possible. That is the *participatio actuosa* advocated by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Seen from the Christian perspective, every act of worshipping the Father, every opportunity to serve one’s neighbour in the name of Christ is a chance to deepen the connection with the Lord²⁸. At the same time, this co-relation between liturgy and morality is an explanation of the dynamics of the Christian relationship with God. Since liturgy is nothing less than “an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ”, during which “the sanctification of the man” takes place, and for that reason is “a sacred action surpassing all” and, therefore, “no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree” (SC 7). On the one hand, liturgy is perceived as “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed”, which can be reached by living a moral life. On the other hand, however, the liturgy is the “the font from which all [...] power flows”, namely God’s

²⁶ Ibidem, no. 100.

²⁷ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 16.

²⁸ Cf. *Synowie w Synu. Teologia moralna fundamentalna*, red. R. Tremblay, S. Zamboni, tłum. B. Widła, Warszawa 2009, p. 434.

grace (SC 10). The grace itself is understood as the ability to experience the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, which “are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues”²⁹.

The liturgical analysis of *participatio actuosa* requires some reference to current existence of a Christian, since *Sacrosanctum Concilium* must be interpreted in the context of all Conciliar documents, in accordance with the hermeneutics of continuity and integration, as it is the only right way of interpreting the document in question. We need, therefore, to refer to the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, especially to the moral dramatic anthropology included in it. It is a concept of man seen in the entirety of his historical reality. This dramatism is characterised by the tension between “the bondage of sin”, which is the source of mutual distrust, enmities, conflicts and hardships (cf. GES 2 and 8), and the theological facts of creation and redemption (cf. GES 2). Between them we can find the “already”, but “not yet” completed act of salvation. The moral anthropology of this document assumes the dramatic sense of existence of man, which is the reason why he suffers from internal divisions (cf. GES 10).

As such, it is the subject of the relation between liturgy and morality, in which the grace of God meets the freedom of man, also in its sinful form. Both the history of religion and the Revelation of the Old Testament point to offerings made by man as expiation for his sins, which is an inherent element of this relation. The New Covenant changes the direction of making offerings. The Christian concept of the offering of Christ for the salvation of man is connected with the calling to imitate Christ, as “Following Christ is [...] the essential and primordial foundation of Christian morality”³⁰. It is then a completely new and specific relationship with the priest and the Offering present in the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist. In this sense, conscious and active participation is the ability to offer oneself (cf. SC 48). The offering seems to be a necessary

²⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1813.

³⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 19.

element of the liturgical *participatio actuosa*. That is why the Christian offering becomes the liturgical and moral *actio*.

In Christian liturgy the offering stands for the free and conscious, and thus spiritual, participation in the salvation work already completed by Christ. In morality the offering is understood as a process in which grace makes human purification and change possible, and human participation in this process is voluntary, initiated by one's works and fighting one's internal and external resistance of one's sinful nature and history. In this relation, which has its liturgical and moral dimension, Christ forestalls man through His offering, at the same time calling for man's participation in the offering through the commandment of love. The time and space in which this relation exists is the world, ethically ambivalent, good and evil, in which there is a need for devotion, righteous works, moderation in the desire for earthly values and fortitude towards the dramatic tension of the historical existence of man. The grace one receives through liturgy does not relieve men from the obligation to act morally, e.g. through spiritual death or, in case of martyrdom, physical death as well.

Only through self-sacrifice is it possible for man to return to the source of harmony with God from whom he originated. It happens in this way as in our history and nature we can only access God in a human way, which means in human relationships, in the reality of our bodies, in the context of history³¹. That is why the only thing man can actually offer God is himself. Because of that men are considered to be sacramental beings, as what was really given to man and accepted by him becomes a visible sign of invisible God.

3. Final remarks

This presentation of a part of the entirety which grants us access to indefinite reality of God must stay open to further research and analysis.

³¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Sakramentalne podstawy egzystencji chrześcijańskiej*, [in:] idem, *Opera omnia*, t. 11: *Teologia liturgii. Sakramentalne podstawy życia chrześcijańskiego*, red. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, tłum. W. Szymona, Lublin 2012, p. 200.

The author, a theologian and moralist, aimed at pointing out the existence of the co-relation between liturgy and morality, which is revealed in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. A methodological argument to support this hermeneutics is the interdisciplinarity of moral theology, the subject of which is God working in man. When analysed together, liturgy and morality reveal a specific aspect of this work of God. It is also a form of co-operation with man through grace and freedom, which can only partly be experienced by humans. To some extent it also concerns liturgy and morality, and, therefore, human works as well. Their co-relation leads to a conclusion that in the Catholic interpretation grace cannot be demoralised, as “There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Mt 19:17).

Freedom, on the other hand, cannot be deprived of its theological genealogy, which in the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is referred to as the “sacred liturgy”, as it expresses the truth of God, who, in the Decalogue, introduces Himself as “I, the Lord, [...] your God, who brought you out of [...] that place of slavery” (Ex 20:2). In the last book of the New Testament He is worshipped as the one “who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood” (Rev 1:5). So the co-operation of God and man means a constant co-relation between grace and freedom, and, as a result, between liturgy and morality. What is more, this co-relation between the two protects them from being reduced to ritualism and moralism. “What man is and what he must do becomes clear as soon as God reveals himself”³². *Katabasis* of God conditions *anabasis* of man, also in the liturgically-moral sense. This article and the analysis of the problem that it contains was the author’s attempt to understand this issue better.

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³² John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, no. 10.

Summary

Liturgy and morality. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in the Context of Moral Theology

The fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of *Vaticanum II* encourages attempts of its interpretation in the context of moral theology. It leads to the conclusion that there is a co-relation between liturgy and morality in the history of salvation. The Revelation of the Old Testament reveals the conjunction between worship and morality. Attempts to separate the two in the history of the Chosen People raise objections of prophets. Their criticism, however, comes together with the announcement of the future in which God will reveal the divisions between worship and morality. The New Testament shows the fulfilment of this promise in Jesus Christ. His salvific work establishes the Christian liturgy, in which man participates as a physical, as well as a spiritual being. The salvation, made present in the liturgy of the Church, is a relation, the co-operation of God and man, grace and freedom. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* presents this revealed truth, emphasising the objective and subjective dimensions of liturgy as the work of Christ, in which a Christian participates actively, freely and consciously (*participatio actuosa*). The participation is mostly spiritual, therefore moral at the same time. Only then can the external elements of liturgy take place, including its detailed forms, gestures, attitudes and behaviours of the sacred liturgy participants. It means that the liturgical *participatio actuosa* requires moral works through imitation of Christ leading to conversion. That is when “faith works through love” (cf. Gal 5:6). It leads us to the notion of sacrifice, which, as far as man is concerned, requires a total change. Sinful man presented with the love of the Triune God may respond to it with his own, gradually maturing love. The process constitutes the drama of God and man, which is the tension between grace and freedom, which is then represented by the co-relation between liturgy and morality. What is more, this particular co-relation makes an authentic experience of liturgy possible, protecting it from being reduced to sheer moralism and ritualism.

Keywords

Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Gaudium et spes*, co-relation between liturgy and morality, drama, covenant, prophetism, eschatological tension, active

participation, sacrifice, imitation, conversion, moral and theological virtues, *katabasis* of God, *anabasis* of man

Streszczenie

Liturgia i moralność. Próba teologiczno-moralnej lektury Konstytucji o liturgii świętej *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

50. rocznica uchwalenia Konstytucji o liturgii świętej zachęca do teologiczno-moralnej interpretacji tego dokumentu *Vaticanum II*. Jej owocem jest stwierdzenie istniejącej w historii zbawienia korelacji pomiędzy liturgią i moralnością. Objawienie Starego Testamentu odsłania koniunkcję kultu i moralności, a próby jej rozerwania w historii Narodu Wybranego spotykają się z ostrym sprzeciwem proroków. Krytyka ta zawiera jednak zapowiedź nowej przyszłości, w której Bóg usunie podział między kultem a moralnością. Nowy Testament przedstawia realizację tej obietnicy w wydarzeniu Jezusa Chrystusa. Jego zbawcze dzieło ustanawia chrześcijańską liturgię, w której człowiek uczestniczy jako istota duchowo-cieleśna. Zbawienie aktualizowane w liturgii uświęca przez łaskę, która może być przyjęta jako miłość Boga respektująca wolne działanie człowieka. Zbawienie uobecniane w liturgii Kościoła jest bowiem relacją, współdziałaniem Boga i człowieka, łaski i wolności. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* wyraża tę objawioną prawdę, podkreślając obiektywny i subiektywny wymiar liturgii jako dzieła Chrystusa, w którym chrześcijanin czynnie, świadomie i owocnie uczestniczy (*participatio actuosa*). Jest to przede wszystkim udział duchowy, zatem również moralny. Tylko wtedy możliwy jest zewnętrzny wymiar liturgii, w którym zawierają się szczegółowe formy, postawy, gesty i różnego rodzaju działania uczestnika świętej liturgii. Oznacza to, że liturgiczna *participatio actuosa* wymaga moralnego działania poprzez konkretne naśladowanie Chrystusa, prowadzące do nawrócenia. Wówczas „wiara działa przez miłość” (por. Ga 5, 6). W ten sposób dochodzimy do pojęcia ofiary, która w przypadku człowieka polega na jego całościowej przemianie. Grzeszny człowiek obdarowany miłością Trójjedynego Boga może na nią odpowiedzieć własną, stopniowo dojrzewającą miłością. Proces ten konstituuje dramat Boga i człowieka, czyli napięcie pomiędzy łaską i wolnością, któremu odpowiada właśnie korelacja liturgii i moralności. Co więcej, zależność ta pozwala na autentyczne doświadczenie liturgii i moralności, chroniąc je przed redukcją do rytualizmu i moralizmu.

Słowa kluczowe

Sobór Watykański II, *Sacrosantum Concilium*, *Gaudium et spes*, korelacja liturgii i moralności, dramat, przymierze, profetyzm, napięcie eschatologiczne, czynne uczestnictwo, ofiara, naśladowanie, nawrócenie, uświęcenie, cnoty teologalne i moralne, *katabasis* Boga, *anabasis* człowieka