

w drodze

MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE



BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Your personal guide for
World Youth Day in Kraków

THE POWER OF LOVE
How to Make A Good Confession

**IS IT OK FOR CHRISTIANS
TO BE ANGRY?**
How To Deal With Uncomfortable Feelings

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Dear Reader,

It is with a great sense of joy that we hand you this special edition of the monthly magazine “W drodze” (*On the Way*), published by the Polish Dominicans for over 40 years. Produced specifically to coincide with the 2106 World Youth Day, we hope that its content will help to enhance your encounter with Pope Francis.

Inside you will find articles on the beauty and power of the sacrament of reconciliation, together with others about living your faith in daily life. The theme underlining all of them matches the theme of the 2016 World Youth Day here in Cracow: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” It is this message of love that is beyond human understanding. The message about God who is good and loving, even if we are still not ready to repent. The message about God whose arms are open to embrace us with forgiveness and the gift of peace.

We learn about this merciful face of God from many Gospel stories. The story of a criminal dying on the cross next to Jesus, whose plea for mercy—whispered in pain—opened paradise for him. The story of the prodigal son who wasted his share of the inheritance so painstakingly earned by his father—who nevertheless received him with open arms, calling him his beloved child. Or the story about the thief from Jericho named Zacchaeus, a traitor and informant, with whom Jesus himself wanted to dine.

Our wish is that you may discover in these days the power of God’s love, the love that brings us back to life. Happy are those—says the Gospel—who experience it. |

Roman Przelecki op

special edition

World Youth Day 2016

Blessed are the Merciful

- 6 Confessing your love fresh from the cesspit
interview with Wojciech Ziółtek S.J.
- 19 You are innocent
Dominik Jarczewski O.P.
- 31 Confession or repairing the Church
Maciej Müller
- 44 Cold in our home
Wacław Oszejca S.J.
- 55 La conscience et la créativité
Wojciech Giertych O.P.

Psychology and Faith

- 68 Just like any other feeling
interview with psychotherapist Andrzej Wiśniewski

Personal Guide to Fasting

- 80 Le jeûne aux frutti di mare
interview with Wojciech Nowicki
- 93 Don't eat bacon, buy a cow
Jolanta Brózda-Wiśniewska

On the way to the Altar

- 103 And I would like Ennio Morricone
interview with Maciej Soszyński O.P.

Church Controversies

- 115 Christian jihad?
interview with Tomasz Gałuszka O.P.
- 127 You cannot be born here
interview with Luca Gianni

Dominicans for Sunday

- 136 Friendship | Nicanor Austriaco O.P.
- 137 How to discover the sacredness of God | Marcin Szymański O.P.
- 138 D'abord écouter | Marcin Magdziarz O.P.
- 139 Wer bittet, der empfängt | Martin Grandinger O.P.
- 140 There is nothing I shall want | Richard Ounsworth O.P.



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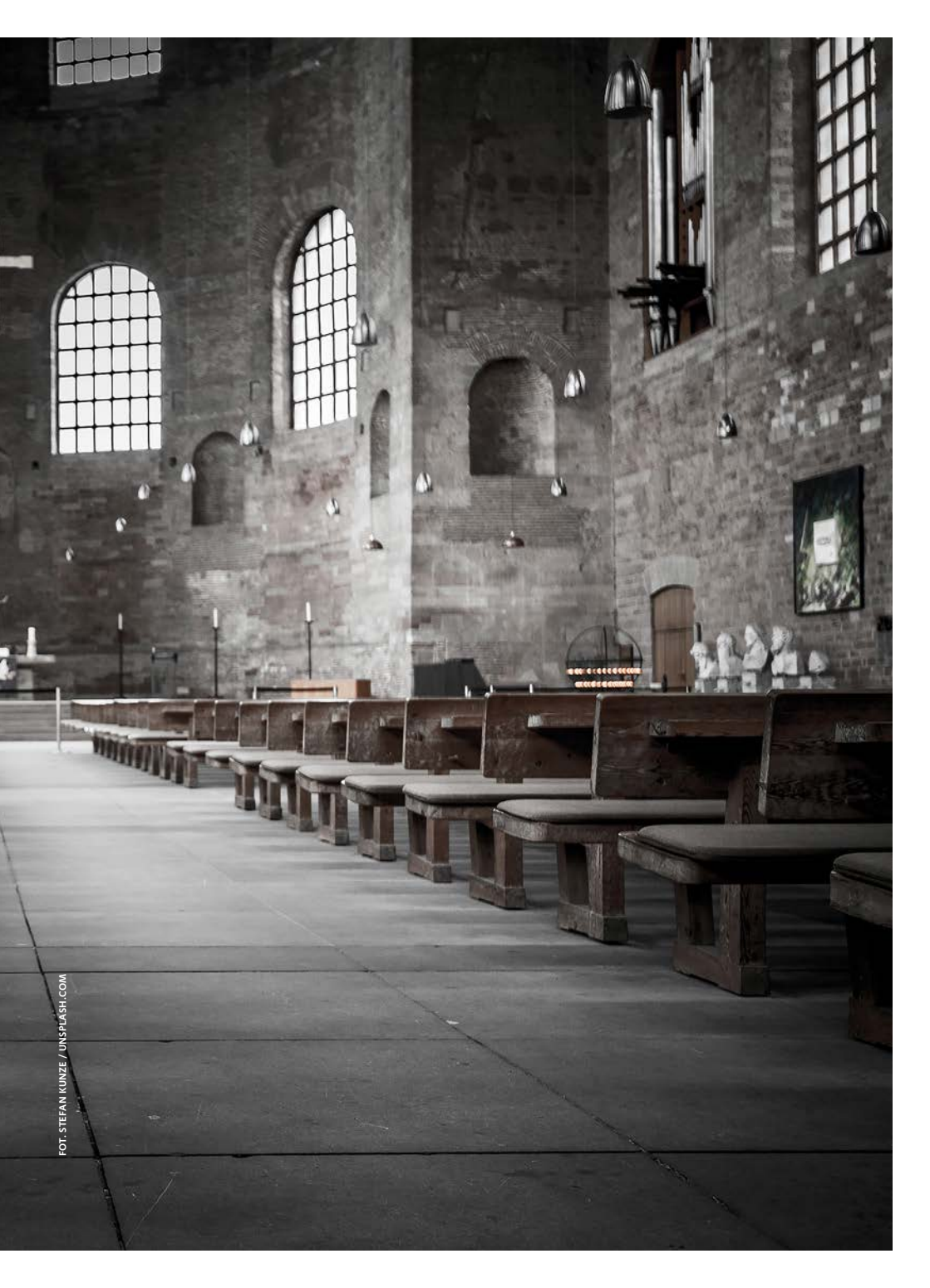
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*Blessed
are the Merciful*



Confessing your love fresh from the cesspit

Confession is showing the Lord Jesus that in this place it hurts and a little there, so that He would kiss these painful places, so the pain goes.

Roman Bielecki OP speaks to **WOJCIECH ZIÓŁEK SJ**

Why do we speak so often of confession? Is it proof of the vitality of this sacrament or rather our sense of being helpless in being one with its spirit?

Probably one and the other. Most of us can sense that thanks to this sacrament it is possible to do a lot of good, and at the same time, a lot of wrongdoing. Each of us in this regard has considerable experience – ranging from the time when it seemed that we had caught the Lord by the proverbial coat tails or when we did not know what to do, to shout or cry.

I remember how in year two of senior high school I went to confession to one of the churches in my home town of Radom. In the retreat they told me that it's good to have a “home” confessor and best that he be a friar. So I went.

It was a typical “on the bell” confession. I rang the bell for the priest and waited. And to this very day I do not know whether I interrupted the priest's dinner, his reading the newspaper or his after-dinner nap – for when he came, he was very angry and shouted at me like a madman – raging mad, for a long time.

For the next twenty two years I didn't even set foot in this church. And when I wanted to enter the ranks of the Order, I didn't know exactly to which but knew that certainly not to this one, haunted by the mad friar.

Did Father manage to overcome this open wound?

Yes – after twenty years of being in the Order. I thought to myself: Ziołek you are now an adult and it's high time to face the demons of the past. So I went to confession at that particular church. I met a young priest who was very kind to me and who said a number of valuable things. And that's how it ended. Not everyone ends up as a friar, not everyone has enough courage to confront the confessional and so, they stop coming to confession. That of course is in fact a case of being helpless.

Once one of my fellow Dominicans said confession on the eve of high holidays was a form of “supermarket-shelf penance”. This met with a strong reaction from one of the bishops who pointed out that such expressions are inappropriate. How does Father see such ad hoc confessions? Does this practice need to be condemned or reformed?

As a Jesuit it is not my place to instruct Dominicans – though if one of my fellow Jesuits were to make such a comment, I would ask him: “And who are you to make such hasty judgements of your fellow man? How do you know what really makes him tick?”

I have a particular liking for confession on the eve of high holidays. In my time I have been both a priest in the traditional sense and one looking after an academic community, so I know what I'm saying. I give absolution then as long as I can – and feel as I'm in the temple of Jerusalem during Pascha. Some bring lambs as a gift here, over there a crowd is spilling over, while over here some are selling doves – literally a bustling circus of human activity, noise and no room to move. I particularly enjoy confession on Easter Saturday when on the one hand people come with little baskets to be blessed, and on the other,

as they stand in giant queues to the confessional. Confession is simply a heaven-earth reality.

It is a time when people bring all their burdens together with the sausage to be blessed. They come, stand in a line, wait, give up or don't. It varies – but only God can see into their heart. Something though, tells them to stand in the queue and confess their sins. And – let us not be hypocrites. As a friar or as a priest do we always confess our sins without undue haste, in all elegance and in exemplary fashion?

Near one of our cloisters there is a shopping mall. First Empik mega-bookshop, Carrefour, *shop till you drop* and then the next on the list: the confessional – not to forget the swimming pool. Where is the dignity of the sacrament in all of this?

Actually smack bang in the middle. Thanks to this a living God appears – through imperfect people and imperfect rituals. And what about Ash Wednesday at the covering of heads with ash? Then we are all equal. Women with coiffures, only lightly tilting their beret or hat and balding men, boys in dreadlocks and girls hair jelled and lacquered, middle aged people fatigued by life with ever increasing furrows on their forehead and small children, curious as to what their elders are up to. Everyone bows their head, for that is their need. It's not important whether spiritual or psychological – we don't examine this in fine detail. Everyone comes to God.

A long queue to confession means that most often there is no time to speak to someone for a bit longer. What then?

Yes and no – I always try to ask: “In general, how are things?”, or “How are you managing?” If someone has something that troubles them, they'll say if they want to – if they don't, they won't. Experience tells me that if something is troubling a person, they'll speak up. Or sometimes they might not be ready.

I remember one of my confessions when I hung out all my dirty washing – which was not so easy – and heard from the priest: “Fine”. That’s all. Then he gave me absolution. Well, in the end was this confession important for you?

Yes – in as much as that on leaving the confessional, I felt I was not taken seriously because I came expecting to hear something important – and the priest, not a word. How should instruction be understood in these situations?

I’m not sure that we should always issue teachings. Let us look at Jesus. What does the Bible say: “And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, *Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?* She said, *No one, Lord.* And Jesus said to her: *Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.* First, always try to act for the good, second avoid opportunities for wrongdoing, third – keep to the fast...” As you can see Friar Bielecki – nothing of the kind! Jesus didn’t provide the woman with any ready made teachings. In one place he “spoke”, in another, he didn’t – because advice doesn’t come in the form of formulaic answers. Sometimes a few words are needed, sometimes only absolution. Above all, it’s important we come to the confessional as people. It is in this way that we best follow Jesus.

Then what do we need the confession for in the first place? What’s the point of going to another person and in addition, confessing to our sins?

In reality this is a question about why I don’t say to myself that I’m great or that I love myself. After all, everyone needs such affirmation – though somehow we’re not self sufficient in this regard. For this to have an effect we need to hear it from someone else, because life is all about relations. Confession is the same – declare your foul-heartedness and stupidity and hear from someone, you are now forgiven.

Someone could say that such a confession is enough at the beginning of Holy Mass – after all, confession is there as well.

At the end of the day only God knows whether a person that goes to confession had declared all their sins or not. I think though, a quiet confession in the priest's ear as it were, is one of the great wisdoms of the Church – for it is proof that the Church takes Incarnation seriously. We are human, which means not only a passing spirit but also body. We need someone else who shall tell us – you are forgiven. Did you hear? Yes, really.

We say that confession is about sin.

I don't agree. Confession is not about sin as such but about avowal – and twice over at that; a declaration of sins and a declaration of love. And this declaration is the subject of confession. I declare a love for Jesus, and He declares a love for me.

In that case why a listing of sins?

So that this mutual declaration of love does not simply become a purple patch of cooing removed from life – so that it be based on the hard nitty gritty. And so that I'm not accused in this place of evangelising revolutionary ideals, let us turn to the Bible where we have Peter's confession. Jesus after resurrection, as well as the events of Good Friday asks three times: "Do you love me?" He does not ask of regrets, does not ask whether he will never again betray me etc. Jesus does not mask the wrongdoing, does not pretend that nothing has happened but asks only of love: "Are you ready to declare your love for Me after all of this?"

In that case are we not to state our sins since Jesus knows about them already?

No, for that very reason – to state them one by one. It is important not to forget why.

How did Peter's conversation with Jesus end? Peter said: "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You".

That is, You know how many my wrongdoings and stupidities number and You know I am aware of this. But I love You. And this is a confession – an avowal of love. And on the other hand – God says to me that despite my wallowing in the cesspit, He loves me all the same.

Only that during confession usually we are not able to cross over to that second part of the sentence. Instead we worry whether we have really declared everything.

I compare confession and declaration of sins to a scene from childhood. When we were small, we would go with friends from our block to some strange places on the river or to a building site. We would return home faces dirty, crying, with cuts and abrasions. Mum would then ask: “What on earth happened to you?” We would then mumble something, trying to make up a believable story and add that it hurts. We would show where and then mum would say “Show me, I’ll kiss it and it’ll stop”. And then what? She kissed the spot and it stopped hurting. More – it was so good that we would show other spots and add that it hurts still here and still a bit there.

A confession is just another ‘warts and all’, like a grimy kid, form of statement when we show Jesus that in this spots it hurts and a little in that one – so that He kisses these painful spots, so that they stop hurting.

Do sins need to be understood rather than felt? We don’t always have the feeling after all that we have done something wrong and at the same time, the Church teaches that it is a sin, What then? Not to confess or for peace of mind, declare this in the confessional?

If someone says they don’t understand then maybe in fact they don’t – but after all they are aware and this tells them that something is not right. And in fact for people like that the Church’s teaching are truly important.

Those penitents need to be thanked for their nobility and honesty in the confessional – for being able to express their doubts, for the fact they’re sincere and admit that they are not ready to take that further step in their life. This shows that they did not come to throw the priest’s awareness off the track and slip through the grate of the confessional but rather, they treat themselves and the sacrament very seriously. In my view, in such situations the priest should not demonstrate his puffed up moral superiority, but take the side of the penitent and try and understand him.

It is important to watch out for fiction. It is possible to declare sins so they appear not as sins. So if in our heart we do not desire change, then confession becomes simply gratuitous – and we deceive only ourselves. I believe that the task of the confessor is to make those in penitence aware of this. Naturally with great delicacy, but without beating about the bush. No one likes fiction of this sort and people – especially the young – have a great desire for authenticity and frankness – there is a lot of altruism.

In that case how do we shape our sense of conscience?

Let’s look at it from a definition of sin – and I don’t mean subtleties of interpretation in the Bible. Sin is when a person strays from life’s aims. And this becomes painful. It’s as if avoiding a penalty in a world championship final. So that it becomes clear though that I have strayed from my aims, I need to have these in the first place and find them important.

Saint Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises* does not begin from a definition of sin, only from the Foundation, which says “Man is created to praise, revere, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul”.

When we find our aims and then see how far we have strayed, we begin banging our head against the wall – and this is a good feeling of regret for sins and a real pain arising from having committed them.

I'm afraid that from catechism at school we do not take any sense of aims but an official image of God. That is why later on a priest is simply an official and the confessional, a counter at the office where you go to record a statistic.

An official approach to God is based on settling debts that are starting to mount. And on the one hand in fact, there is the debt that is sin and without that experience of God's presence there is no Christianity. The only problem is that this debt cannot simply be repaid – like pulling a rabbit out of a hat. That is why Christianity is demanding. It is easier therefore to live a life without a sense of debt than knowing that you owe everything to someone for the very fact that you are alive – for you have been saved from passing without necessarily making a contribution. Christianity is the joy we experience being found. I wept in the corner like the proverbial lamb that lost its way and no one was able to find me – only He, my God, found me and gave comfort.

What then with the rather mechanical confession on the first Friday of the month? What do we say to parents that send their children to confession? Children at first go then begin to say: “There's no point going on the first Friday – why, I haven't sinned”. But mum and dad's intuition tells them: “If we don't accustom them to confession, then soon they won't come at all”.

First, let us not call confession on the first Friday mechanical, as if going through the motions and second, we shouldn't interfere in the way parents raise their children. We shouldn't tell them what to do and how they're to be parents – for they are with their children every day and just as they teach them to eat and speak, they know how to teach them confession.

The monthly confession is not so much a mechanism but rather a ritual, and rituals have a special place in relationships. I remember from my own childhood how on Saturday my father would polish everyone's shoes. This was a very important ritual.

We had a small flat, so he would clean and polish them in the bathroom. Why? For the next day was Sunday, and Sunday is a day other than all the others. Only man can see the difference between the days – my grandfather’s cows did the same on Sunday and Friday, that’s how they are made (laughing). Humans on the other hand can see the difference – can celebrate holidays, can observe the fast.

It all depends what status is given to the first Friday. If mum says in an indifferent voice, lying on the sofa: “Go to church my dear, confess”, while watching *The Losers*, then this becomes a tragedy. If, however, she says to her son: “We’re going together to confession to open our heart to the Lord Jesus – for everyone of us is weak – for He still loves us very much, including mum and you my dear too”, then you can see immediately that this is a different line of thought, this is a different first Friday.

Behind this approach by parents there lies the fear that at some point a child will have to go through a crisis of faith – and parents thus try to put this off as far as possible in time.

And justifiably so. Children need to be given some fundamentals. My grandfather never worked on Sunday, even when the local priest gave a dispensation for harvesting, when it finally stopped raining. Grandmother would say to him: “Franek we should go?” And he would reply: “If you wish, you can go. I won’t, for work on Sunday turns to shit”. He would put a white shirt on, buttoned up to the collar – any more and he’d choke. He would go the bench near the road and talk to the people there all day or with us, play the card game ‘Thousand’, because it was Sunday, the Lord’s day on which we praise God by resting, and not work. Grandfather has long been gone and what has remained for me from all of this? Simply, I don’t work on Sundays either, for work on Sundays turns

What will children be left with from this practice of going to church on the first Friday? Maybe not a lot and sooner

or later they shall go through a crisis of faith because their mother's explanation won't be enough any more. Even if they will question this childhood practice some time in the future (a part of growing up in regard to faith), somewhere under the surface the attitude of parents will have its impact to the very end.

Let's stay with the issue of children. The means of experiencing school-type confession can burden our conscience. How can we change this?

It's true that we often remain at the level of a simple ledger of conscience from the First Communion Book. The years pass, communion outfit now tight, and we continue to try and fit into it. We're forty and say that we don't listen to our parents, pray to God etc. Not to mention keeping the fast on Friday, which in Polish culture has a rather cosmic dimension and is treated the same as the commandments.

And even more so. It's a type of zero commandment. First there is: "Israel hear, thou shall fast on Friday", then for a long time nothing and only then: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ...:" The fast is the fundament – and the fast on Friday in the Octave of Christmas and Easter, unless some bishop deigns to agree that on that day there is to be no fast. Should he forget to issue the decree, then contrition and you need to confess. And even if he does remember, those that are more sensitive, wiser through experience, will all the same fast just in case.

Let us return to an examination of conscience. How is an adult meant to go about this? Often we see people coming with a list of detailed sins.

Dear Father let us not judge people harshly who come to confession with notes. Maybe some are afraid or their present psycho-spiritual state is such that if not for the 'shopping' list, they would go to pieces? Or maybe this piece of paper is a sort of "social minimum" – for thanks to this, they can look

into their conscience, at least on the basis of a list. Maybe this is far from perfect but after all, we should always remember our weakness as humans and what Jesus said – that at present you still do not understand but afterwards you shall know...

That's the case with the minimum, though the maximum I'd say is what St Ignatius says – that an examination of conscience is the ability to see God's place in me and how He works. That is, I look into my conscience, into everything that has occurred that day or week and examine the ebbs and flows of my heart. I do not judge them on the basis that here it's bad, there good – only see that here I have fallen, there I have not.

What had led me to this? Why, although God has spoken to me, have I for one reason or another committed a sin or been able to show restraint? What has taken place? And this is an examination of conscience – not on the basis of a single choice test, but the realisation that in all of this that has taken place, God has been present – as well as in my sins. He was there all the while close by, spoke, showed the way and did not leave me.

In all of this that Father has mentioned, I hear the echo of St Paul's words – about a strength that is tempered in weakness.

My almost fifty-years of being a witness to weakness has meant that this Pauline maxim is very close to my heart. That is why no doubt we speak so much about confession, for that is a reality in which on the one hand we experience weakness very deeply – both ours as well as the penitent's, and we are exposed to the workings of emotions, nerves, anger, fear and on the other hand, at the same time almost the palpable presence of God's mercy.

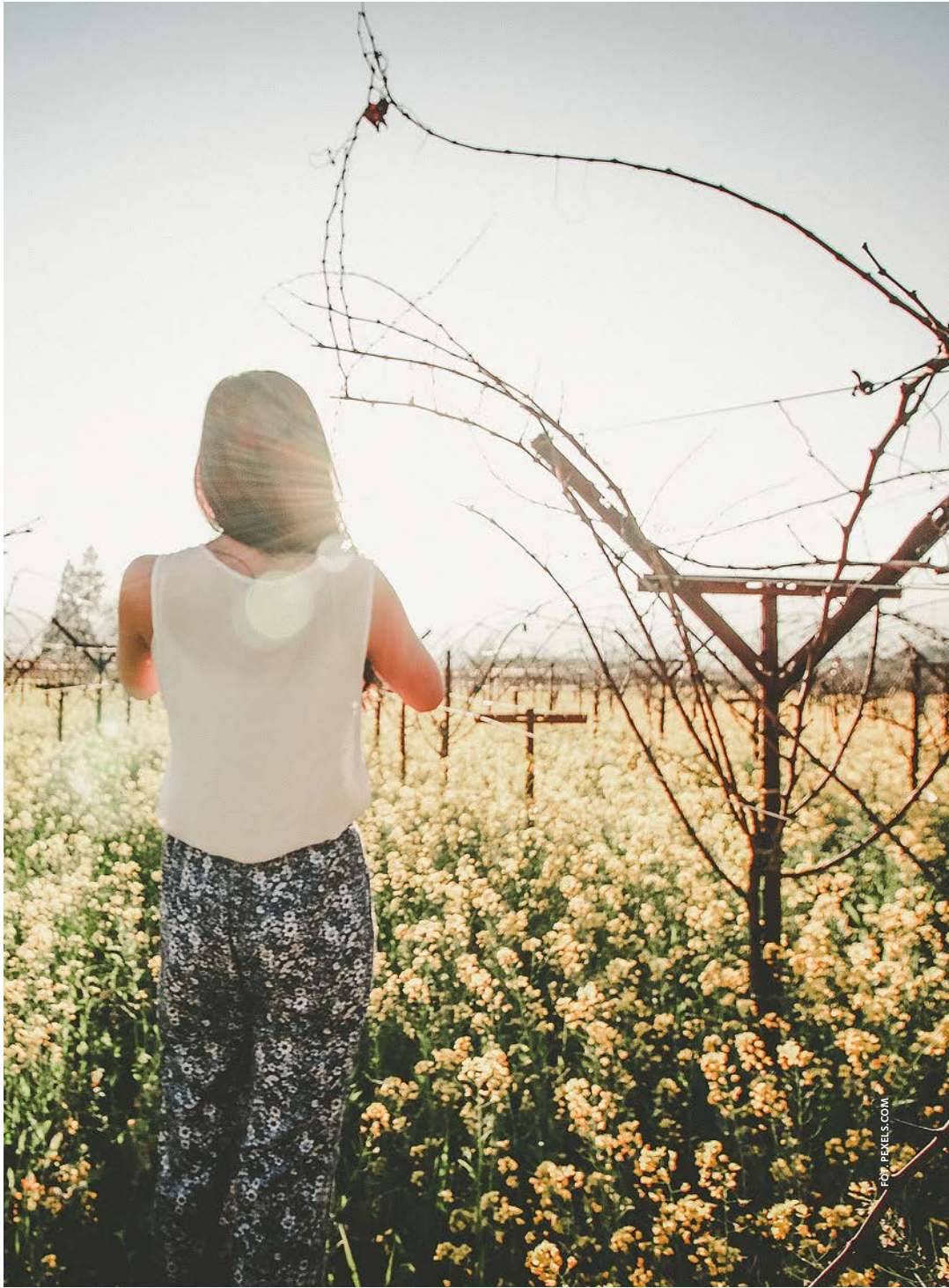
We should not be angry at people that confess either too briefly or interminably, those in detail or those with a broad brush, those skating over the surface or those that are too pedantic. They confess according to their ability, how far their weakness allows them. We absolve them as best we can,

as best our weakness allows us. Everyone's plough is their own how and strength set in weakness grows a good length.

I do not know what a good confession is and who I am to instruct anyone in this regard. I will say this, I am always very happy when during confession someone begins to understand, experience and sense that Jesus loves them just like a grimy kid, stinking from the cesspit, someone wounded and ugly. And this does not make them go to the shower first then to the doctor and cosmetician – but embraces them already here and now – and looks them in the eye, asking “Do you love me? Do you have the courage to say this? Do you have the courage to declare this to Me right now? Do you really love Me? For as it so happens, I love you very much!”

And so I think to myself that perhaps this is a good confession. |

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You are innocent

When God forgives a sin, it is entirely erased, nothing is left on the margins. God restores innocence completely as if the sin had never existed.

DOMINIK JARCZEWSKI O.P.

It is half past four in the morning. A hall in an old castle still bearing traces of its previous splendour is packed with almost 400 women. There is something peculiar in their eyes. Sleep deprivation? Tiredness? Or maybe an unnamed sadness, depression and hopelessness. The content of their life is a frightening and stupefying silence. But this silence is suddenly interrupted. A monk in a white habit stands in the middle of the hall. What will he tell them? What sins will he remind them of? What kind of eternal punishments will he threaten them with as many preachers of his times used to do?

But they will not hear any single word of condemnation. Even if the next day they will listen about hell, which was one of compulsory subjects of their retreat. With disarming embarrassment the dominican monk will even apologize to them for talking about hell. There will be no single word about God's anger or punishment. Instead, they will hear amazing words about his merciful love, his kindness and forgiveness.

'My dear sisters!' – the preacher begins his sermon. It is 15th of September around 150 years ago in Cadillac, south-western France, in one of the five central female prisons of the Second French Empire era.

A monk and a sinner

The name of the Dominican who led the retreat in Cadillac was Jean Joseph Lataste. He was 32 years old at that time. He had been ordained only one year and a half earlier. He joined the Order of Preachers when he was 25, later than his contemporaries usually entered seminaries or religious congregations. Previously, he worked as a tax clerk. Such work is hardly associated with mercy, but mercy became the theme of Father Jean's life and preaching ministry.

He is a member of a religious order that was restored after the French Revolution in 1840s. It was the era of a charismatic preacher and intellectualist Fr Henri Dominic Lacordaire, who restored a number of monasteries and sent his dominican brothers to work and pray in them. In 1859 Lataste, then a dominican seminarian was sent to one of those monasteries to Saint-Maximin in Provence, where dominicans looked after the Saint Baume – the shrine of St. Mary Magdalen. According to the Church tradition, she has been identified with Mary of Bethany. She was said to have sailed to Marseille with her siblings Lazarus and Martha, and work as a missionary among pagans. There is a cave in Saint Baume where Mary spent some time repenting for her sins.

Lataste's stay in Saint-Maximin resulted in an amazing friendship with this saint-sinful woman. When he and three other monks were ill, Lataste was granted a privilege of kissing St. Mary Magdalen's head during the solemn installation of her relics at the shrine. His very first mass was said at the St Mary Magdalen's chapel. So it is not surprising that the holy woman is often mentioned during the retreats he led

in prisons. Lataste encourages his audience to follow her path by rejecting their sinful past and surrendering themselves to the mercy of Jesus. Christ did not come to condemn them. He does not want to join the crowd eager to stone them to death, but He defends them in the name of love stronger than any evil, fear or revenge. God is above all that.

I start reading the collection of Fr. Lataste's writings in French. I realise he was my peer as a member of the Order of Preachers at that time. I know how his story ended – with an amazing series of conversions. What did he say to them? What kind of speech could have bear such power? How could such an unexperienced retreat leader have succesfully communicated with 400 women with such troubled histories?

Behind the bars

The Dominican priest starts his retreat with a question: *What are you here for?* He does not ask: *Why? What kind of evil brought you here?* It gives me the creeps when I read his words to the prisoners: *You are here because God wanted you here.* Was Lataste trying to assign secular justice with the power of God? I realise he is far from it when I read a few more lines of his writings. Love is the only reason for God to bring the women to prison. If He did not love them, He would not care what choices they made. He would let them commit more crimes and eventually bring eternal punishemnt upon themselves. But God loves them and therefore he wants to give them one more chance. He used the justice system to stop them halfway. He has new plans for them.

But what kind of plans are there for somebody who's life is limited to a few square metres of living space, a prison yard, a workshop and maybe a prison chapel? Even if some of those women repented, reconciled to God and were forgiven, it means nothing to their prosecutors and prison guards. The sentence must be served out. If every minute of your life is planned by someone else, is it possible to do anything sensible with it?

Lataste tells the prisoners about a way of life that totally different to theirs, but only at first glance. He means other women who, just like prisoners, live in isolation, silence and spend their time on work and prayer. They do not have any property, they exchanged their freedom for obedience to their superiors. They live far from their families. They are called nuns. They freely abandoned what the prisoners lost because of their crimes. Therefore we have the faultless ones and the sinful ones. But is it not true that the immaculate Mary and sinful Magdalen were standing side by side by the cross where Jesus Christ died? If God forgave prisoners, they are innocent again. They are equal to those who never turn their backs on God. Did the compassionate father love his prodigal son less than the faithful one? Does not God rejoice more over one soul that he found and saved than over ninety-nine that did not get lost? Does a mother of an ill or troublemaking child love him less? On the contrary!

The retreat led by Fr. Lataste lasts four days. There are two talks every day – in the mornings and evenings only, at the expense of prisoners' sleep. Not even a minute of their working day can be wasted. The retreat is not compulsory, but there are many women willing to attend them. Some choose to stand by the door. They are too ashamed to come closer. After all, is there anything in their life to be proud of? They have faced arrest, investigation, trial and eventually long days spent in obligatory silence, which does not let them forget about their crimes. In fact, everything is reminding them about what they had done. That is why Fr Lataste tells them that he feels particularly sad when he enters the prison gates: because of crimes the prisoners had committed and because of gravity of their punishment.

Cadillac prison did not have a good reputation. The high suicide rate was a taboo subject. The prison management agreed to host a retreat every year (along with the then popular 24-hour adoration of the Blessed Sacrament) in order to improve their reputation. It is hard to say if the managers really wanted to

make prisoners' lives better or if they have done it for the sake of the public image. But regardless their true intentions, God did what he wanted to do; to meet those human beings who were considered to be abandoned by Him.

The Dominican monk encourages his listeners to keep their hope against hope, to disregard other people's opinions and to believe that God does not reject them. God's mercy knows no limits. The more obstacles arise on its way, the more difficult situations are, the deeper the fall is, the stronger the power of mercy works. God does not demand someone's life to be completely changed and guilt to be fully paid for, so under those conditions He could do sinners a favour and forgive them. For isn't it true that to be forgiven by God, a single cry for His help is enough? Fr Lataste is inspired here by St. Francis Sales's words: 'Forgiveness is granted rather through a simple and trustful return to God, not through sorrow, discouragement and dwelling on one's guilt.'

Forgiveness is not for sale, it is a gift. The Penitent Thief is a good role model for Fr Lataste here. By asking Jesus an impertinent question, he has 'stolen' salvation for himself. That does not mean it is good to wait with repentance till the last minute, for every minute spent in harmony with God on this earth is precious. Above all, the Penitent Thief is a good example of simplicity and priceless reconciliation.

Also nowadays, preaching about simplicity and trust are of great value. Although 150 years passed, are we actually free from a suicidal self-absorption with our sins and weaknesses, instead of focusing on God's love and mercy? Divine mercy is not only for the others but for ourselves as well. But we tend to think that God is interested only in our sins, as if they were the only thing that has ever happened to us. But God cares for our guilts for one reason only: he wants to forgive them all. Thanks to the mystery of Divine mercy, we can safely and honestly come to terms with our sins. We can face them, because there is Someone who can set us free from them. Otherwise,

we would have to deny or minimalise our sins or let the feel of guilt devastate us. God invites us to take a different path, a smooth path of kings. If he really does, is there any point in taking a bumpy one?

To let go of the past

The way Fr Lataste treats his listeners makes us ask how we should treat not only criminals but sinners in general. Usually when we meet them, we feel like obliged to show them our disapproval. There is a beautiful saying 'Love the sinner, hate the sin', but who can do that properly? Another attitude to sinners is indifference. It happens when we do not know how to behave, we do not want any conflicts with them, so we easily come to a conclusion that everybody is responsible for themselves, so we do not want to be bothered. In both attitudes something crucial is missing: it is love.

What Fr Lataste teaches us? I feel inspired by his way of addressing his listeners. He calls them 'poor daughters'. There is much more in that than mere preacher's exaltation: it reveals that the first victim of every sin is the sinner himself. No matter what he gained thanks to his sin, he lost his priceless unity with God. No matter how much he hurt his victim, it is incomparable to the murder he committed on his own soul. A sinner is the one who deserves the most compassion. An amazing relationship between the Dominican monk and his spiritual sisters arises from compassion. He tells them that they are family, so they can be honest with each other and talk openly about difficult things. For sure he is not their prosecutor. He is not only their teacher, but above all, he is their brother.

Such an attitude stands out from what the prisoners were used to. They have been condemned for the rest of their days. Even if they serve their sentence they know very well there is no future for them. For the society, they are defined by their crimes. Lataste is well aware of that. His heart revolts against

this situation. If God forgives sins, why people who name themselves Christians cannot be forgiving? To sum up his teaching, Fr Lataste cites St. Paul: *I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. (Philippians 3.13-14)* God does not ask us who we were some time ago, he is only interested in who we are today, says Lataste. If the prisoners let God's love change them, if they strip off their old selves, they will go to heaven just like sinful Mary Magdalen, whom the Church has proclaimed saint. And if so, should other repentant sinners be refused sainthood?

Scandal

The last day of the retreat at Cadillac brings Lataste's strongest statement. Everything he wanted to say was in his notes, but he entirely changed the text after a number of confessions and conversations he had with his penitents. Not only prisoners, but also the prison staff listened to his last talk. The monk says everybody thinks the prisoners are guilty and unhappy. Yes, the committed crimes and they were guilty - in the past. But they are not guilty now. If Christ deleted their sins, if he forgave them, there is nothing they should be accused of. God does not forgive partially or conditionally. He forgives totally. The whole debt is cancelled.

If we believe the sacraments are effective, why do we behave as if they did not work? Did Jesus love Magdalen less because she used to be a great sinner? Did Jesus keep reminding Augustine that he was not always following God's way? When God forgives a sin, he wipes it out completely. He restores innocence in the fullest meaning of the term, as if the sin have never existed. Because there is no sin any more!

One year later, when Lataste had been asked to lead another retreat, he mentioned some man who had been unjustly

accused and sentenced. His case was famous those days. The man was eventually rehabilitated. Lataste said to the prisoners: You will also be rehabilitated at the judgment after death. You confessed your sins, Jesus forgave you everything. You are innocent! No suffering, no effort will be forgotten. Joy and happiness that awaits you in heaven goes far beyond any compensation that you may get in this world.

In other words, in presence of justice officials, Lataste said that 400 prisoners were innocent. It must have sounded like undermining the law! Moreover, the priest admitted that in private conversations prisoners admitted they have become happy indeed. They also wanted to spend the rest of their imprisonment immersed in God's love just like cloistered nuns. That must have outraged 12 nuns from the congregation of Daughters of Wisdom who, with a proper Christian 'strictness', worked at the Cadillac prison as guards (sic!), cooks and nurses.

Risky idea

One year later, Lataste come back to Cadillac to lead another retreat. This time he cut his talks from eight to four and left more time for individual meetings and confessions. He even did not complete his pre-talk notes. Two of his last talks were put together on a day-to-day basis, inspired by conversations with the prisoners.

The monk returns to his priory, but he is not the same any more. He learnt as much as his listeners did. He comes back with an idea that has never left his mind from the beginning of the retreats. He wants to found a congregation for women willing to become nuns after having served their sentences.

It was unlikely for Lataste's prisoners to return to a normal life in the society, so to let them become nuns sounded simply unimaginable. Is not this kind of lifestyle reserved for the best? After all, many congregations at that time used

to disqualify their candidates not only due to their immoral conduct, but also due to social status or being an illegitimate child. But despite everything Lataste wants to set up an order for former prisoners, prostitutes or women who had an abortion which was a punishable act at that time. In addition to that, it is going to be a special kind of congregation – a contemplative one!

Of course, there were a lot of shelters for women from the margins of society, for instance there were 'Magdalen asylums'. But they were pitying and helping 'those poor women'. They treated them as recipients of Christian mercy, but not as human beings who have equal rights with nuns.

There was no congregation which would accept prisoners as its regular members. On the other hand, the dominican priest met many women who had a real vocation to contemplative life. When he saw those women again after a year, he was reassured. So if it is God's will, a new congregation must be founded.

Lataste did not want to force Providence with his plans, so he seeks opinion of the bishop of Bordeaux. At first, the bishop is in favour of the idea, but eventually he steps back. He is afraid of competition that may arise between the new congregation and a shelter for women which was already operating in his diocese. The dominican accepts that his idea will remain unrealised. As soon as he did that, everything begins to happen according to his plans.

A Piece of heaven

The wife of the Cadillac prison's director visits the nun who is the headmistress of the school in Bourret, Sr. Bernardine. She belongs to the Order of Presentation. The director's wife tells the nun about the amazing retreat in prison. Bernardine became a nun to help the poor and the excluded, but instead she heads the school for the upper-class girls. No wonder she doubts it is the right place for her. She shares those doubts

with her confessor, Fr. Soudreau, who happens to be Fr Lataste's provincial. The confessor tells Sr. Bernardine about his brother's idea. Some time later Bernardine and another nun are sent to Fr. Lataste as first candidates to set up a new congregation.

Bernardine leaves the Presentation Sisters and goes to meet Fr Lataste. However, she gets terrified when she finds out that she has been wrong in three important matters. Firstly, the religious order does not exist yet. Secondly, she will be its superior general. The third thing and probably the most difficult one: the new order is not going to be a shelter for women of the street, but the place where both women burdened with their sinful past and women without such a burden will enjoy equal rights.

Bernardine does not know what to do. She has already left her community. The die is cast, but her expectations were very different from what she saw. But Fr Lataste does not lose his head. He calmly suggests the nun go on a four day personal retreat, similar to that at Cadillac. A few days later Bernardine accepts her new mission. At the end of the year 1866, she professes her solemn vows as sister Henri-Dominique, dominican of Bethany and she becomes the first superior of the convent in Frasne-le-Chateau. Among the first members of the new congregation there is the Bernardine's above mentioned peer and two former prisoners.

It goes without saying, the newly founded congregation is the fulfillment of Fr Lataste's last retreat talk, when he said: in heaven there will be no difference between sinners and people who during their lives were considered saints. All who have gained eternal life will be contemplating God together. They will also be enjoying each other's company. The prisoners have already anticipated that when they took part in an all-night adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Fr Lataste thought they would be praying on a rota basis, for example a couple of prisoners every 30 minutes. But he was greatly astonished

to see around 150 prisoners praying together replaced by the other 150 halfway through the night. It was truly a piece of heaven on earth.

The dominican monk died of tuberculosis on the 10th March 1869. It happened five years after his memorable retreat and a little more than two years after founding the new order. The Dominican Sisters of Bethany still exist in spite of initial difficulties, denunciations and many attacks from inside the church. They bear witness of the Divine Mercy that is able to delete sinful past. Nowadays candidates to religious life do not have to have a faultless reputation. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why sisters of Bethany have less vocations. But one thing still raises great controversies: Divine Mercy restoring innocence without any exceptions, conditions and totally for free. |

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Confession or repairing the Church

A sin is not a matter that concerns only me and God. A sin destroys the community too. It is in its name that sins are forgiven by its representative – a priest. There are no neutral acts that affect nobody else but me. We are saved and condemned together. Today's degree of individualism has made the awareness of this disappear.

MACIEJ MÜLLER

Let's imagine that we have only a single chance to go to confession in our whole life. Too hard? Instead, imagine a confession during which the priest studies a sin schedule and sums up penances prescribed for sins you have recited. The total is over a dozen years of fasting on bread and water and a recommendation to sleep on a bed of nutshells.

We can breathe with relief and feel happy to live in the 21st century; further, we ought to realize how lenient the Church is about the question of confession today. Another matter, however, is if this leniency has done us any good.

Single penance

In the early Church mercy was not cheap. Suffice it to say that the well-known story of Christ and an adulteress did not form part of many New Testament manuscripts in the first three

centuries of Christianity. Neither did the eastern Fathers of the Church contemplate it. This act of Christ must have been perceived as hard to understand and one considerably weakening the Church's teachings on morality.

The teachings centred on a catalogue of cardinal sins that were then called 'inadmissible'. Among them were murder, disowning of faith (including idolatry as well) and adultery. For a Christian who committed any of them there only remained to do penance for the rest of his life and hope for God's mercy. To be forgiven by the Church was a vain hope. This harsh rule was based on a fragment from the Epistle of St. Peter according to whom "For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them". In the next sentence, the Apostle likened those who had accepted Christ and sinned to a dog which returns to his own vomit.

A spark of hope was brought by the emancipated slave Hermas, who lived in Rome in the 2nd century AD. Badly afflicted by his own children, who betrayed him to the authorities as a Christian, he had visions that imparted to him that even a great sinner had a chance to repent and be forgiven. He expressed this view in his work *The Shepherd*.

One hundred years later, the rank of this conviction was raised by St. Cyprian in his treatise *On the lapsed*. In it, he discouraged the too easy forgiveness of wrongs by the Church but also stressed the healing power of suitably given penance. But a person could be given it only once in accordance with a thesis formulated by St. Ambrose: *sicut unum baptismum, ita una poenitentia* (as there is one baptism, there is one penance).

With time, great theologians saw, however, that excessive harshness may result in some kind of elitism, dislike for the act of penance or even the faithful leaving the Church. Therefore, such personages as St. John Chrysostom or Pope Leo the Great spoke of the possibility of repeating penance.

What else evolved was the thinking on cardinal sins. They began to be understood as sources of other sins rather than acts that must not be committed under any circumstances. New catalogues of such sins were compiled: one of the most popular was authored by John Cassian who included sadness among them, next to the seven we know. Popularity was also enjoyed by less formal and authoritative catalogues of sins like the following one found on the cover of some 13th-century Florentine manuscript: “The devil has nine daughters whom he married off: simony to lay priests, hypocrisy to monks, pillage to knights, sacrilege to peasants, simulations to servants, fraud to merchants, usury to townsmen, world pride to matrons, and lechery whom he did not marry off, but offers her to everybody as a lover”.

Regression

Since the times of Leo the Great, confession had been acquiring the form we know today: sins were confessed in public ever less often; instead this was done personally before a priest. Finally, in 1215, the Fourth Council of the Lateran decreed aural confession and sealed it with sacramental secrecy.

Our confession differs from the medieval one in an important detail: today we make use of various examinations of conscience, whereas in the past similar lists were used not by the penitent but by the priest. Previously known as books of penance or penitentiaries, they can be and often are an easy pretext to ridicule the perversion of some sins named in them (for instance, when we read about nuns satisfying each other sexually with an artificial penis). However, it is worth looking at them with humility and ponder whether the people of the Middle Ages, in their perception of sins and their remission, were, perhaps, more mature than we are.

A point has to be made that the confession of old was by no means perfect – obvious abuses were recorded. It happened

In the Middle Ages people realised that my act, my sin, actually was never entirely mine. I have sinned with regard to the community of the Church for which I am responsible.

that a priest, distrusting the penitent's good preparation – which did not surprise as the awareness of the moral teachings of the Church was neither deep nor widespread – asked him about various sins using a book. Nothing wrong with that, but it was much worse when the confessor did not listen to the penitent at all but read out successive items in his catalogue and made him confess to one sin after another. As a result, the poor wretch confessed to acts he did not commit. This must have been not so uncommon since some medieval theological treatises forbade to read penitentiaries aloud ...so that the penitent was not exposed to the temptation of unknown sins.

Historians generally describe these books as 'judicial' and stress the rate-like nature of penance. There is a crime, there must be a punishment of a suitable magnitude – almost as in customary law. The priest acts as a judge, while the penitent is both the accused and the accuser. Indeed, the reading of penitentiaries may give such an impression. While the conviction about the judicial character of medieval confession cannot be easily rejected, this description is far from being complete. "These books form a stage in the thinking about God, the Church and sin that puts us to shame by showing our regression," believes Fr Tomasz Gałuszka, a historian with the UPJPII and the Dominican Institute of History in Kraków. "The stressing of only the judicial character of penitentiaries follows from the modern understanding

of the categories of guilt and punishment. When you read them, you see above all that in the Middle Ages people realised that my act, my sin, actually was never entirely mine. I have sinned with regard to the community of the Church for which I am responsible. The evil I have done, even if it never comes to light, destroys it exactly in the same way as good and asceticism build it. There are no neutral acts that affect anyone else but me. We are saved and condemned together. Today's degree of individualism has made the awareness of this disappear.

Fr Gałuszka sees in books of penance a very wise ecclesiology, showing that all of us form the single mystic Body of Christ and that we are all responsible for one another. "For the people of the Middle Ages, a community was so great a value as to make it hard to understand for us. Suffice it to say that hermits were not valued in the first place for the ascetic way of life they took up but for their courage to leave their communities. The greatest sacrifice was a conscious and voluntary leaving of the human community".

Father Gałuszka, speaking of the communal dimension of sin, points to the public character of imposed penance. This was not a brainchild of the authors of penitentiaries – the custom dates back to the ancient Church. Tertullian asked: "Whether it is better to be condemned in secret or publicly absolved?"

The Council of Nicaea of 325 AD distinguished four groups of penitents and assigned each group a specific place in a church. 'The weeping' were not allowed to cross its threshold, 'the listening' stood in the narthex, 'the kneeling' (this position was then a sign of penance and not of devotion) stayed in the back of the nave, and the 'co-standing' were allowed closer to the altar but without access to the Holy Communion. Hence, the status of every penitent was publicly known. The conviction that penance had to be done in public prevailed until the Middle Ages.

The catalogue of penances sometimes surprises us with its severity, the more so as many of them were performed in public view. The most frequent kind of penance was a fast on bread and water. A pilgrimage was recommended too, sometimes with a stipulation that it could not be performed on horseback or by wagon. More sophisticated kinds – the way we see it today anyway – included standing with one’s arms spread and singing psalms (penance of the ‘cross’), whipping, sleeping in water or in nettles, or on nutshells, in a cold church or in a grave next to a corpse (*memento mori...*)

Medication

The other key, next to *societas* (community), to the understanding of the Middle Ages and penitentiaries is *medicina* (medication). It was not about punishing the sinner but about healing him or her. While designing the ‘rates’, a principle taken over from medicine was followed, holding that “like be cured by unlike”. The outstanding medieval scholar Aron Gurewicz says that hubris was cured with humility, greed – with almsgiving, laziness – with zeal, garrulity – with silence, adultery – with abstinence, gluttony and drunkenness – with a fast. A murderer was prohibited from carrying arms.

The authors of penitentiaries often implemented a programme designed to combat particularly widespread sins in their times. It is worth naming them with regard to our present-day weaknesses ... And so efforts were made to eradicate interest in, and the practice of, magic. In the times of rising interest in vampirism, a fragment from the penitentiary of Burchard of Worms is worth reading: “When an infant dies without being baptized, they take its corpse, hide it in a secret place and pierce it with a peg, believing that if this is not done, the infant will rise and cause a lot of damage. If you have done

There was a suggestion that after hearing confessions, the priest should, together with the penitent, pray before the altar, lying prostrate.

so or have allowed this to be done, or believed in this you ought to do penance for two years”.

Merrymaking students should listen to these warnings: “Have you drunk so much that you vomited while being drunk? Have you boasted that you can drink more than others and have you, through your vanity, encouraged others to get drunk?”

The same author noticed also careless behaviour of some faithful during services. He chastised them for not giving up worldly worries while in church, for not asking the dead for intercession, for moving only their lips without being truly engrossed in prayer.

The books of penance may therefore be treated as a collection of prescriptions for specific ailments: a description of an ‘ailment’ is followed by a recommendation of a suitable ‘medication’.

“Let’s remember that in those times people did penance not because they were forced to by a priest,” Fr Gałuszka stresses. “They took a sin to be a sickness that afflicts their bodies but also the Mystic Body”. In the case of such harsh types of penance, we would probably speak of lack of respect for human rights, disregard for human dignity – whereas a medieval sinner accepted penance in the belief that it would help him recuperate and return to the community. A monk ‘punished’ with three years of solitary confinement for disobedience treated it as convalescence. Today, unfortunately, most of the people who end up in prison believe that they have to do time unjustly, because they have done nothing wrong. This is a failure of this

Father Gałuszka, who examines future confessors, sometimes asks them how they would explain, to a penitent who has doubts in respect of the form of confession imposed by the Church, the need to confess before a priest and not directly before God.

system: if convicts are unaware of the evil they have done, they will do it again after they are released.

That penance was treated very seriously is evidenced by the fact that the authors of some penance books ordered confessors to assist penitents. One of them writes: “Each time Christians come to be given penance, we should order a fast and unite with them ourselves”. Another author suggests that after hearing confessions, the priest should, together with the penitent, pray before the altar, lying prostrate.

Individualism

The point here, of course, is not to prove the perfection of medieval practices. Some of the customs in times past would hardly be acceptable today and even seem to be permeated with hypocrisy. One such example is paying someone else to do penance. A British penitentiary provides for an equivalent of 20 solidi for seven weeks of another penance (poorer people could pay 10 or 3 solidi). In England, a custom took on whereby a man given the penance of a particularly long fast could pay a group of people to ‘do’ it for him much faster. There was a notorious 11th-century case of Peter Damiani imposing a penance to last 100 years for practising simony (buying a church office)

on the bishop of Milan and setting an equivalent right away: a sum to be offered to the monks who took over the penance.

“I would be far from calling these practices hypocritical,” Fr Gałuszka observes. “Let’s not pass value judgments applying today’s criteria. Again, the role of community comes to the fore among the people of the Middle Ages. It is obvious that nobody can fast for one hundred years and the penance was not reduced, as, apparently, the gravity of the sin was great. Hence, let’s not be surprised by people taking the burdens of others on themselves or an interceding prayer. After all, if we accept that we are members of one body, what’s so strange about this?”

Father Gałuszka, although he does not call to mechanically emulate medieval practices, deplors the fact that penances imposed today only to a small extent attempt to compensate the community and as a rule do not engage the body. “Confessors rarely impose even a fast or lying prostrate,” he says. “Instead, they give saying a litany or a decade on the rosary and even this is not sometimes fulfilled by penitents. Spiritual growth does not in the least engage the body; penance affects only the internal sphere. The effects are very serious,” Father Gałuszka continues. “The experiencing of faith has become purely ‘spiritual’: we withdraw into religious individualism that leads to infantilism. Everybody has a little chamber of his own in his heart where his Infant Jesus lives. One of the results is a frequent impulsive rejection of the institutional Church, because “what right it has to meddle in my affairs, it is supposed to occupy itself with the spiritual”.

The loss of the sense that sin has social consequences leads to a peculiar spiritual egocentrism or perceiving one’s faith solely as a vertical relationship (I – God) to the exclusion of the horizontal one (I – community). Pope John Paul II wrote on this subject in the Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* of 1984:

To speak of social sin means in the first place to recognize that, by virtue of human solidarity which is as mysterious and intangible as it is real and concrete, each individual's sin in some way affects others. This is the other aspect of that solidarity which on the religious level is developed in the profound and magnificent mystery of the communion of saints, thanks to which it has been possible to say that "every soul that rises above itself, raises up the world." To this law of ascent there unfortunately corresponds the law of descent. Consequently one can speak of a communion of sin, whereby a soul that lowers itself through sin drags down with itself the church and, in some way, the whole world. In other words, there is no sin, not even the most intimate and secret one, the most strictly individual one, that exclusively concerns the person committing it. With greater or lesser violence, with greater or lesser harm, every sin has repercussions on the entire ecclesial body and the whole human family. According to this first meaning of the term, every sin can undoubtedly be considered as social sin.

The teaching of John Paul II on this subject is considered far too rarely and is almost absent from pastoral work. Moreover, the first words of Confiteor ("I confess to Almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters") are too often mechanically recited by us.

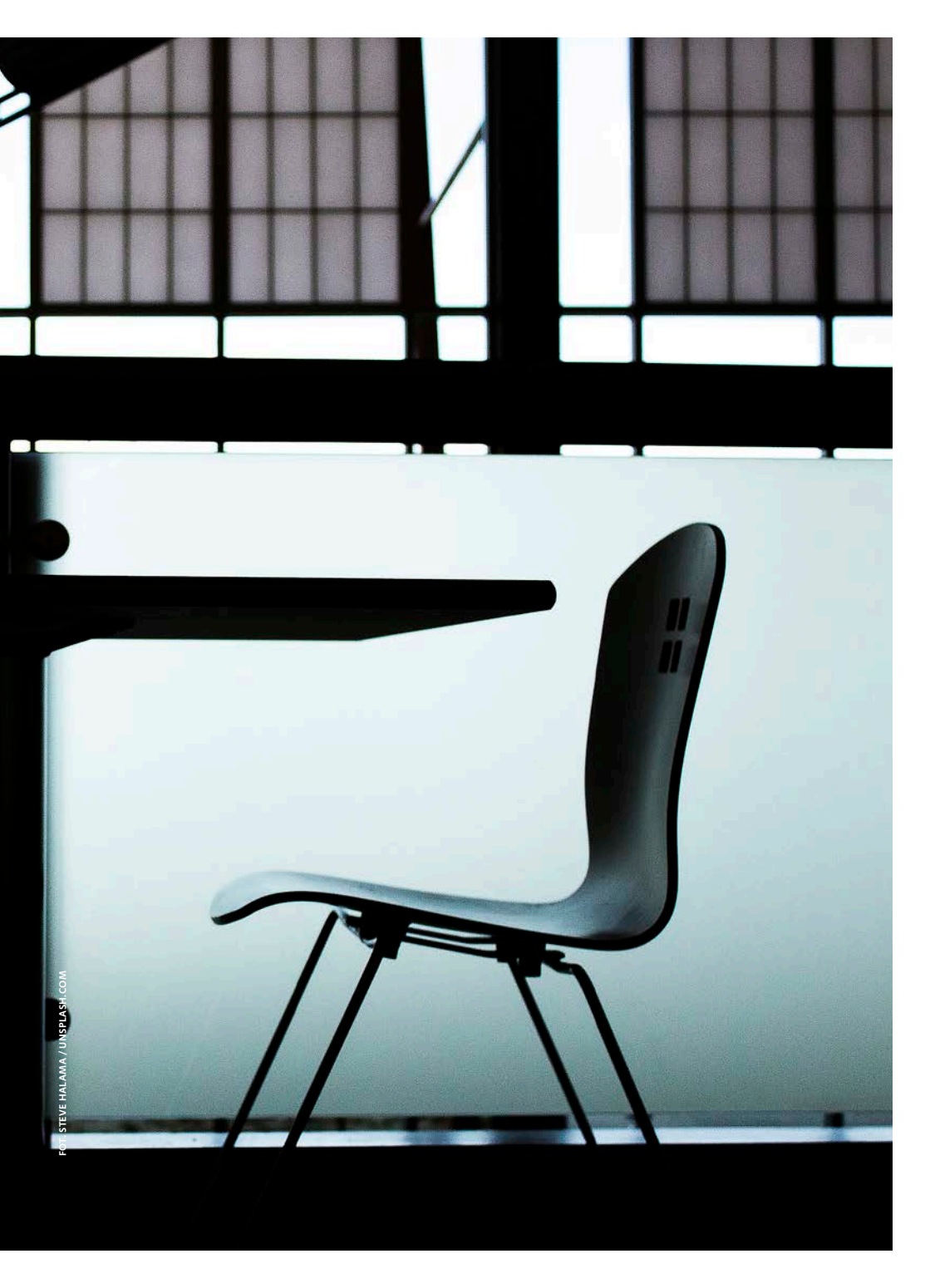
Father Gałuszka, who examines future confessors, sometimes asks them how they would explain, to a penitent who has doubts in respect of the form of confession imposed by the Church, the need to confess before a priest and not directly before God. "This can be convincingly done in one way only," says the Dominican. "By reminding that sin is not a matter only between him and God, that it also damages the community. It is in its name that sins are forgiven by its representative – a priest". Thus, let's not laugh at people living in 'Dark Ages', because it may just as well turn out that it is we who come out

poorly in comparison. Let's follow them in the conviction that confession is a lot more than a private act of faith directed at God. Rather, it is an act that repairs the Church. |

I used the following books: Aron Guriewicz, *Problemy średniowiecznej kultury ludowej*, Warszawa 1987; Fr Grzegorz Ryś, *Między sądem a medycyną zbawienia*, „Znak” 520/1998; Jacques LeGoff, *Kultura średniowiecznej Europy*, Warszawa 1970.

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Cold in our home

If there is no affection, kindness and trust between the inhabitants of a bishop's residency, presbitery, monastery or convent, and if nobody wants to be with their housemates such a dwelling cannot be called a home.

WACŁAW OSZAJCA S.J.

I do not like statements sayings such as: 'our real home is in heaven' or 'our homeland is in heaven', or 'he has gone to Heavenly Father's home'. It is unacceptable for me to say that the world is 'a valley of tears', 'a land of exhile', almost a prison that you want to leave as quickly as possible. After all, when we are about to leave that valley of tears, we are rather reluctant to do that. We would not spend so much money on medicines if we really believed in those sayings. Therefore, an attempt to divide reality into desirable eternity and disgusting temporality cannot stand criticism in the light of the Incarnation dogma, where God has materialized Himself. Do we really have to live in such schizophrenia, where our body is here and our soul is 'out there'?

Disinherited on request

Such schizophrenia makes us homeless, confused exhiles. Orphans-who attack everyone and everything with fury.

We do it as someone who has been thrown out on the margins of reality, as someone who lives only a poor substitute of life, who lives in an imaginary world, even a very pious one – for such a person everything is, as pope Francis said, *the ghost to fight against*. One might get frightened with such an image of life *understood as an escape or hiding place in face of an 'external' difficult and complex world*. As a result, one begins to build a shelter or bunker or sometimes even a burrow instead of a home. Although the Pope addressed the above quoted words to religious people, they concern all Christians, including clergy. After all, if we remember who should serve whom in the Church, is it at all worthwhile to divide believers into laymen and clergy? Publicist and theologian Piotr Sikora thinks that the image of *the Church where there is a clear line drawn between 'the pastors' and 'the faithful' is very dubious from the point of view of modern studies on the early Church and New Testament*. Therefore, the world is the Christians' home, for its Creator and Redeemer Jesus Christ lived and is still living here. *Jesus came and preached peace to you (...) For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit* (Ephesians 2. 17-22)

If we are the priests of God who loves the world, especially its bad, weak and sinful side, then our primary aim is to like the world. Jesus Christ says: *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him*. (John 3.16-17) The world in St. John's Gospel does not have

a geographical but rather moral meaning and it means the most lousy and wicked side of it.

So our home is here, on the earth which is painfully being born as a new earth under along with the new heaven. Is it not true that evolution should be understood as the act of building the eternal home for men and for God? *Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.* (Revelation 21.1-2)

One Father

More and more often we can hear that pope Francis calls-not only laymen, but also bishops and cardinals, his 'brothers'. For instance, he did it in his address concluding the *ad limina* visit of the Polish bishops or in his speech after conclave. This is how titlature is slowly leaving the Church. The Church titlature was sacralized, but in fact it is secular, official, clerical, courtly, political. But now we are witnesses to the return of Biblical terminology. We can hope that change in words will be followed by change in mentality. It is easy to see where calling Church elders 'brothers' can lead us to, compared with the other titles: *Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. “Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others. But you are*

not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (Matthew 23.1-12)

Through these words Jesus shows us how relationships within the Church, in God's household should look like. In other words, Jesus shows us the real foundation for life at presbyteries, bishops' residencies, in monasteries & convents, and consequently in parishes and dioceses, namely in the whole Church.

But what is the situation today? Let us see. Two priests are talking. One says: 'You know, our new bishop and I are on first name terms.' The other priest says: 'That is wonderful.' The first priest: 'How about you?'. The second one: 'Well, I call him Your Excellency'. The same thing happens between the parish priest and his assistant or between the abbot and a religious brother.

If only we had no practical problems, we could have left those politeness terminology puzzles alone. But practicalities look like this: On the day of ordination to diaconate and priesthood, the candidates can hear from their bishops: 'Dear sons'. Moreover, we call the bishop 'Venerable Father'. So what is this fatherhood and sonhood all about? For sure, it is not about a sentimental and immature return to childhood. Neither it is an image of the dearest daddy and a son as good as gold, or a lovely mummy and the sweetest little girl. A bishop cannot copy the way a father treats his son, neither a son can treat the bishop as a second dad. Both of them should follow God as the Father, Jesus as the Son and both should have the same Holy Spirit. The Divine Sonhood of Jesus from Nazareth is not revealed to its full in the stables of Bethlehem or even in the miracles, but in *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me* (Matthew 27.46). If we forget about that, then paternalism

and childishness immediately run rampant among us, followed by secularism and courtliness. Pope Francis often reminds us of that. And if that happens, how can we say that a presbytery, bishop's house or monastery is a home, if there are no house-mates, but at most, members of community?

Manager or brother?

The same thing may happen at seminaries and novitiates. A novice master, a prefect rector, professors... if we forget for a single while who is our real Master, we will immediately begin to ideologise our sisters and brothers. That means we will shape them in our own image. This is how Francis sees it: *The ideologues falsify the gospel. Every ideological interpretation, wherever it comes from – from [whatever side] – is a falsification of the Gospel. And these ideologues – as we have seen in the history of the Church – end up being intellectuals without talent, ethicists without goodness – and let us not so much as mention beauty, of which they understand nothing.* If so, it is pointless again to call such an environment a home. Instead, there are novices, seminarians, professors, etc. It is easy to check how this looks here. If there is no affection, kindness and trust between the inhabitants of a bishop's residency, presbitery, monastery or convent, and if nobody wants to be with their housemates and share with them joy or sadness – such a dwelling can hardly be called a home. How shall we change it? *We must form their hearts,* said Francis. *– Otherwise we are creating little monsters. And then these little monsters mould the People of God. This really gives me goose bumps.*

Another perfect test is our attitude to conflicts. In our Church they are still considered to be symptoms of bad will or stupidity, or even more – a sign of a lack of piety and obedience. Our heads are still full of fear from 'the ill bird that fouls its own nest', contrary to how the poet [Cyprian Kamil Norwid, famous Polish 19th century poet – JB-W] rephrased that proverb: *Is this bird ill*

*that fouls its own nest? / Or is it that one who does not let to talk about that? What shall we do then? Shall we avoid conflicts at any cost or keep them secret? And when conflicts eventually break out, shall we bully the parties in conflict with reminding them about their vows of respect and obedience? And if that does not work, drag them to the Church and secular courts? Pope Francis says that *problems are not solved simply by forbidding doing this or that. Dialog as well as confrontation are needed.* An he adds: *To avoid problems, in some houses of formation, young people grit their teeth, try not to make mistakes, follow the rules smiling a lot, just waiting for the day when they are told: 'Good. You have finished formation.'* This is hipocrisy that is the result of clericalism, which is one of the worst evils.*

The conclusion is: not only harmony but also conflicts can be constructive. *Community conflicts are inevitable: in a certain sense they need to happen, if the community is truly living sincere and honest relationships. That's life. It does not make sense to think of living in a community in which there are brothers who are not experiencing difficulties in their lives. Something is missing from communities where there is no conflict. (...) And conflict must be faced head on: it should not be ignored. (...) A life without conflicts is not life. (...) Sometimes the problems in the brotherhood are due to fragile personalities, in which case the help of a professional, psychologist, should be sought. There is no need to be afraid of this (...) But never never should we act as managers when dealing with conflicts in the brotherhood. We should involve the heart.*

Brothers and sisters- not a slogan

Fr Henryk Pietras, in one of his homilies addressed his fellow jesuit brothers: *We invented the phrase 'friends in the Lord'. To tell you the truth, 'a friend in the Lord' fits the word 'friend' just like the word 'chair' fits the phrase 'electric chair'. A friend will not spread gossip about their friend, but 'a friend in the Lord'*

will do that with pleasure. The real friend will not believe in any gossip about you, but 'a friend in the Lord' will do. We all experience that when we call each other 'friends in the Lord'. Along with the word 'friend' we also use the word 'companion' in the Jesuit tradition. No matter what names we use, the problem remains the same: what does it mean to be a friend, companion, sister, brother?

Just like father-son relationship we should see sisterhood and brotherhood from the angle of the Gospel parable of a father who had... two prodigal sons because both of them did not appreciate their family home. They did not understand that they had treasure, which they had not yet grown up to. We can say the same about ourselves. To grow up means to make mistakes. We are the same as sons and servants, the inhabitants of the father's home from Jesus' parable. Thus, the only thing we demand is justice. But if we want to follow The Only Son Jesus Christ, we should be ready to be hurt. As the Church elders we must let ourselves be hurt by others as Jesus did. And that means forgiveness. We must learn to react to being hurt in a Christian way, like God who *is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs* (see Corinthians 13.1-13). It means to forgive in advance, without waiting for being asked for forgiveness. Without performing a miracle of forgiveness we will not build a home, for hatred will swallow us up.

The next thing is readiness to carry sins of others even though our sins are already heavy enough. The members of the God's household open their hearts and confess the most personal secrets in front of the Church elders. This is a great privilege for us elders, but we are often disliked for that, because both in us and in our penitents there is still a lot of pride. No matter if you are a penitent or a confessor, it is always nicer to be a pharisee than a tax collector. It is always nicer to think 'what if...' instead of admitting 'it is as it is'. So as well as being happy at our sisters' and brothers' success, let us show our admiration also for sinners. Then even the darkest

corners of our homes and churches (where often confessionals are standing) will be the brightest places under the sun. The Church will become a family home where everybody is growing up, where there are no old people, everybody is young and our wrongs will bear fruit of goodness.

A priest for a priest?

As the Church elders we will always be feeling bad about each other. It is worthwhile though to have a closer look at this mutual reluctance. Perhaps we behave just like those priests who prosecuted Catherine Doherty, the founder of the Friendship House. She complained to her confessor about clergy who did not understand and accept her charitable work. *They hate you*, her confessor said, *because you do what they should do*. And her archbishop said to her: *Pray for my priests so God could enlighten their narrow-mindedness*.

It is said that the things we do not like in others are our own sins. Maybe this is partly the reason why we are being criticised together with the present pope. The vaticanist Marco Politi said: *The pope who proclaims poverty is acceptable, but not the pope who lives in a two-room apartment*. Therefore, it is alright if someone makes us feel uncomfortable. It is even better if someone makes us feel uncomfortable in our own home than outside it.

What about the money, Reverend?

A priest lives here today, but tomorrow he moves somewhere else. It can happen according to his wishes or he can be made to do this by his superiors. So the new priest arrives, he makes friends, people begin to trust and like him but after some time he has to pack his bags and go somewhere else, and everything starts all over again. That hurts. I cannot take my friends with me and I cannot live only on my memories. I must give out my

heart to my new parishioners as I did with the ones I have just left. Therefore priestly friendships are special. I have to remember Jesus' words, because He is the criterion of my friendships: *I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me (...) Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. (...) All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them.* (John 17. 6-10)

As a result, a priest has thousands of homes and at the same time he has none. In this context the phrase 'friends in the Lord' gains the new meaning. That 'in the Lord' means that our priestly comings and goings are not only a torment, but above all, an opportunity to see friendships in a brighter light. Leaving one place and going to another is like extending our home by adding another floor. That means our home is alive, because it is still growing.

Someone may say that this is too beautiful to be true. A house will not build itself, food will not fall down from heaven, a car needs fuel and you have to pay for bread and wine for mass. So let's talk about money. Pope Francis often talks about poverty and we often put it off saying: OK, I will not charge for a wedding or a funeral, I will not collect any money during mass, I will resign from my mass stipend, but if I do that, I have no idea how to make my living and maintain a church building. As a matter of fact, such kind of poverty does not fit at all with the present clergy and parish financial system, where the parish is a source of income. This system does not work well at all in our Church. First of all, it is unjust. Even worse, it divides parishes into better and worse ones depending on how many people live there and how well-off they are. As a result, one parish priest is lavished with luxuries, but the other one is poor as a churchmouse. Is brotherhood between presbyters or a presbyter and his bishop possible in such

circumstances? Money is not only a matter of stomach, but also a matter of heart. However, such problems cannot be solved by Rome, but by the local Church. If the structure of a parish or a diocese does no longer serve the mission of the Church, (understood as 'community of communities') we have to change it. The reforms taking place at the Holy See provide a good example here.

Church communities will become a home only when the words said by Jesus: 'take and eat my Body' and 'drink my Blood' will go beyond the ritual and become the vital part of every Christian's life, no matter what they do for the Church. In a survey, two-thirds of people said they trust the clergy, but in Poland this figure was only 48 per cent. So the people who share a home with us do not trust us? It is worth finding out why. |

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La conscience et la créativité

La conscience appartient à l'ordre de la connaissance et non à celui des passions. Parfois les gens ne se rendent pas compte de cette différence.

WOJCIECH GIERTYCH O.P.

Pendant mon séjour à Londres j'ai posé la question si – compte tenu de la crise économique – les Polonais vont rentrer dans leur pays. La réponse était: plutôt non. En Angleterre on règle des affaires administratives d'une façon beaucoup plus simple qu'en Pologne, et les gens ne sont pas continuellement la cible de remarques et de critiques. Ils l'apprécient et c'est pourquoi ils ne pensent pas revenir. Cette observation donne beaucoup à penser, d'abord par rapport au mode de fonctionnement de l'État et deuxièmement en ce qui concerne les mœurs sociales en Pologne.

En Angleterre, parmi les fonctionnaires appartenant au *civil service*, l'esprit de service est encore toujours vivant. Par conséquent le client n'est pas perçu comme un intrus dont il faut se méfier par principe. Dans beaucoup d'affaires la déclaration de l'intéressé suffit. En Pologne c'est le contraire: en toute affaire il faut un document qui justifie la démarche. Les fonctionnaires, ayant peur de prendre une décision autonome, respectent en tout les procédures établies. Qui a goûté une

fois de l'administration britannique, se sentira mal quand il devra régler quelque chose dans l'administration de l'état bureaucratique.

En Pologne il y a aussi une forte pression sociale qui décide de ce qu'il convient de faire et de ce qu'il ne convient pas, qui dit comment on peut se comporter, ce qui est permis ou pas. Bien que les gens se disent croyants, ils ne vivent pas toujours cette liberté intérieure dont parlait Saint Paul. Ils restent souvent sous la pression des ordres et des interdictions (Col 2, 20-21). Quand, pour des raisons économiques ils se retrouvent soudainement dans un autre pays et que personne ne leur reproche de se lier d'amitié avec un Nigérien ou de rentrer tard à la maison, ils se sentent libres. Je ne sais pas dans quelle mesure cette explication est juste, mais elle attire l'attention sur la perception sociale de l'éducation morale reçue en Pologne, une éducation qui peut quelquefois devenir étouffante.

Le règlement au-dessus de la conscience

Dans l'éducation éthique on peut mettre des accents de plusieurs façons, ce qui diversifie les réactions. Est-ce que l'essentiel de la morale consiste à garder la correction morale dans les actes concrets, ou plutôt à formuler, connaître et faire respecter les règles morales déduites des lois supérieures? Ou bien s'agit-il avant tout de former des vertus, et donc de forger le caractère d'une personne qui relèvera ensuite ses défis de manière créative et responsable?

Dans la théologie morale catholique des temps modernes l'accent principal tombait sur les actes moraux. La casuistique cherchait à déterminer au niveau théorique l'admissibilité ou l'inadmissibilité de chaque acte. Ce qui semble dominer actuellement dans l'éthique laïque qui influe sur le fonctionnement des institutions d'état c'est la concentration sur la loi, provenant, on dirait, de l'éthique juive. De plus en plus souvent non seulement un fonctionnaire, mais aussi un soldat, un médecin ou

bien un instituteur ne cherchent pas le bien vrai et juste, mais ils essaient de suivre seulement les procédures établies par les instances bureaucratiques supérieures. Si l'on trouve donc un paragraphe correspondant à l'action concrète, on l'accepte sans s'interroger sur l'honnêteté ou la vérité de la situation. Dans cette optique la conscience, considérée comme vague et imprécise, est éliminée de la décision qui ne s'appuie que sur le règlement. Au centre de la vision thomiste de la morale il y a la grâce qui, accueillie par la foi, engendre l'amour surnaturel et d'autres vertus morales. Celles-là, perfectionnées consciemment, rendent le croyant capable de reconnaître et relever ses défis de manière créative et responsable. Grâce à son caractère intérieur bien formé l'homme sait se retrouver dans des situations imprévues, il croit en liberté, non seulement face à la pression extérieure, mais aussi dans sa liberté intérieure qui lui permet de percevoir les valeurs et d'y réagir avec générosité, tout étant en contrôle de soi-même. L'homme mûr a le vouloir propre, conscient et perfectionné et il sait le distinguer de sa velléité émotionnelle ou de la pression des autres.

La synthèse de la théologie morale de St Thomas, quoique respectée dans l'Église, elle avait et elle a toujours peu d'influence sur la pastorale pratique. Dans plusieurs pays catholiques où dominait la casuistique, les gens pensent que l'essentiel de la morale consiste à ce qu'on applique une étiquette "bonne" ou "mauvaise" à chaque acte et qu'on s'efforce d'éviter les actes mauvaises. On a réduit la formation morale à l'enseignement des commandements, et des obligations et interdictions qui en résultent, et à l'application de ces jugements par la conscience aux concrets actes prévus : bonnes ou mauvaises. Dans cette perspective les questions sur le désir du bonheur, sur la formation des vertus, sur l'extension de la responsabilité, sur l'accrochement à Dieu à travers les vertus théologiques et les dons de l'Esprit Saint sont disparus. Même s'il était question de la foi, d'espérance et de la charité, elles n'étaient pas présentées comme des dons de Dieu qui permettent de tisser les liens d'amitié avec Lui, mais

de nouveau comme des obligations. L'interprétation des vertus théologiques non pas comme un don, mais comme des commandements supplémentaires les a marginalisées dans l'éducation et dans la réflexion morale des chrétiens.

La raison au-dessus des passions

Les difficultés avec la réception de l'enseignement de l'Église sur la conscience ont leur origine non seulement dans la compréhension de ce que c'est que la conscience et comment elle fonctionne, mais aussi dans sa place par rapport à la vision globale de la morale chrétienne. C'est alors qu'apparaissent les questions comme par exemple: "Qu'est-ce que je dois faire quand je ne me sens pas en accord avec cette norme?" ou encore: "Comment réagir quand je vois une contradiction entre le jugement de ma propre conscience et l'enseignement de l'Église ou bien si cet enseignement ne me convainc pas?" Pour y répondre il faut savoir non seulement ce que c'est que la conscience, mais aussi comment elle s'accorde avec la grâce, avec la loi morale, avec les passions et les vertus.

La conscience est un acte de la raison et non pas des passions. Elle est soutenue par un sentiment émotionnel, mais ce sentiment n'appartient pas à l'essence de la conscience. Le remords ressenti plus ou moins fort ou d'une façon tout à fait injustifiée n'est pas la conscience et il joue seulement un rôle auxiliaire par rapport à la conscience. La conscience appartient à l'ordre de la connaissance et non à celui des réactions émotionnels. Parfois, faute d'éducation morale élémentaire, les gens ne sont pas conscients de cette différence et ils ne savent pas distinguer en soi la spécificité de la connaissance rationnelle, c'est-à-dire de la conscience et son caractère distinctif du sentiment de la culpabilité, du bien-être, des rêves, des imaginations ou des dispositions d'esprit. La conscience en tant qu'un acte de raison pratique reconnaît la vérité de la situation, qui se trouve dans l'acte prévu ou bien déjà accomplie. La conscience dans son

essence est comme une fenêtre qui ouvre sur la vérité. Il faut en même temps faire confiance au jugement de sa conscience et ne pas se permettre de fuir la vérité reconnue sous l'influence d'une impulsion, d'un caprice, de la pression émotionnelle des autres, par un injustifié sentiment du devoir ou par peur. Ce n'est pas seulement un problème cognitif qui résulte des principes philosophiques. Les gens succombent à un relativisme moral ou nihilisme non seulement parce qu'ils sont des demi-intellectuels et leur raison est maladroite ou manipulée par une idéologie qui limite la connaissance, ou encore aveuglée par trop de plaisirs intenses et banals. Cela arrive aussi parce qu'ils manquent de fermeté d'âme pour persévérer dans la vérité reconnue. La faiblesse du fonctionnement de la conscience souvent ne résulte pas de l'étroitesse d'esprit, mais de la faiblesse de ce qui suit le jugement de la conscience. La conséquence est la fuite devant la vérité et la recherche des excuses parce que la vérité reconnue s'avère exigeante.

La perspective de la personne qui agit

Dans l'action morale il y a un discernement, souvent spontané et automatique, mais toujours rationnel de la qualification morale des actes envisagés. Ce qui compte pour le jugement moral final ce n'est pas seulement la bonne ou mauvaise intention, mais surtout l'acte lui-même, tel qu'il est saisi par la raison. Chaque action humaine possède sa logique intérieure, son pourquoi, et la raison sait le déceler. Il ne s'agit pas ici du mal physique, de la peine et de la souffrance qui peuvent accompagner une bonne action, mais du mal ou du bien moral que la raison reconnaît. Ayant même une bonne intention il ne faut pas agir si la raison y a reconnu un mal moral (même le soi-disant "mal moral mineur"). La raison qui saisit la vérité sur l'acte, se laisse éclairer en plus par l'expérience, par la loi morale qu'elle avait connue, par l'enseignement des éducateurs ou la voix des pasteurs de l'Église. Elle est aussi docile à la grâce de l'Esprit Saint. Il peut

donc arriver que la logique humaine va suggérer une solution et la logique de la foi va en proposer une autre, plus difficile, par exemple, elle va proposer le pardon et la réconciliation.

La loi morale, soit celle qui est contenue dans le Décalogue, soit celle qui est reconnue dans la logique interne de la nature des choses, ou bien celle qui est donnée dans la prédication morale de l'Église, elle joue toujours un rôle pédagogique face au jugement de la raison. Elle ne remplace pas le jugement de la conscience, parce ce que c'est la propre raison qui joue un rôle décisif dans le discernement définitif, quand on définit l'objet moral de l'acte. Jean-Paul II l'a bien rappelé dans son encyclique *Veritatis splendor*: "Pour pouvoir saisir l'objet qui spécifie moralement un acte, il convient donc de se situer *dans la perspective de la personne qui agit*" (*Veritatis splendor*, n.78).

L'homme ne dispose pas d'une autre mesure plus importante que de celle du jugement de sa propre raison dont il doit se servir. Celui qui fuit le jugement de sa propre raison et se laisse diriger par ses émotions, par la pression des personnalités plus fortes, par la mode qui règne dans son entourage ou par le dictat du pouvoir politique, celui subit une limitation de sa maturité humaine et de sa liberté. La compréhension de la morale ne doit donc pas se réduire à l'application mécanique d'une seule et même toujours actuelle mesure à chaque acte imaginé. On accomplit des actes dans des situations concrètes, alors ils sont toujours impliqués dans des circonstances qui les influencent, et ce qui constitue une bonne solution dans les circonstances données, ne le sera peut-être pas dans une autre situation. Comme l'homme ne dispose pas d'une autre mesure définitive que de celle du jugement de sa propre raison, il doit s'y tenir. La raison doit bien sûr y viser la vérité qui est son objet essentiel, et par conséquence elle doit parfois se débattre contre des sautes d'humeur et contre des émotions qui l'aveuglent, elle doit apprendre à distinguer son propre jugement des tentations qui entraînent les sentiments ou la volonté. Dans l'agir moral mûr la raison vise effectivement la

vérité du bien prévu, la vérité que la raison perçoit elle-même, et c'est l'acte de cette raison que nous appelons la conscience.

Choix libre après le jugement de la conscience

La loi morale joue un rôle éducatif important parce qu'elle montre des valeurs, elle constitue donc une aide pour la conscience, et non pas son ennemie. Il faut noter en même temps que les Dix Commandements sont formulés pour la plupart à la forme négative, car ils excluent les antivaleurs et de cette façon on laisse l'espace ouverte au bien qui peut être riche dans sa diversité. La loi morale qui forme la conscience rend l'action morale objective et c'est pourquoi – ce qui l'Eglise souligne très fort – on n'accepte pas la créativité par rapport à la loi morale, bien que la créativité soit importante et nécessaire par rapport à l'acte. On n'invente pas la loi morale selon son propre goût arbitraire. La loi morale nous est donnée et elle nous indique la direction, tout en excluant les mauvaises actions, mais pour déterminer un acte concret et le choisir, la raison doit se caractériser par le courage, l'invention et le discernement propre qui vise le bien.

Est-ce que cela signifie que l'homme doit comprendre toutes les raisons qui plaident pour une norme pour qu'elle l'oblige? S'il en était ainsi, toute action morale serait une torture. Pour le fonctionnement de la conscience il suffit de savoir que la loi morale définit tel acte comme mauvais. Si l'homme connaît en plus les raisons qui justifient la norme, sa raison va adhérer à la vérité avec plus de sûreté. On peut trouver beaucoup d'arguments en faveur de la norme donnée: d'ordre métaphysique, biblique, doctrinal, psychologique, médical ou social. Il n'est pas nécessaire cependant de les tous connaître pour suivre telle norme. Pour que au cours du discernement de la qualification morale de l'acte prévu la raison porte sur lui un jugement négatif décisif, il suffit de savoir que tel acte est décrit par l'Eglise

comme péché, même si les raisons en faveur de cet enseignement peuvent sembler confuses, compliquées ou peu convaincantes. Le croyant, même si sa connaissance des justifications éthiques ou théologiques de l'enseignement moral est faible, accepte l'enseignement de l'Église et y adhère, car il croit que l'Église a reçu de Jésus Christ le mandat d'enseigner les vérités de la foi et les règles morales. Cela suffit pour que le jugement qualifiant tel acte soit donné par la raison, et ce jugement de la raison, donc de la conscience, l'oblige.

Mais on n'en finit pas là. Après que la raison pratique a rendu son jugement sur l'acte prévu, ce qui suit ce n'est pas seulement une obéissance passive ou la désobéissance de la volonté dans l'accomplissement. Quand la conscience démontre la vérité du bien, l'homme peut réagir de plusieurs façons. Après avoir reconnu une valeur on peut réagir d'une façon créative, intéressante, avec invention, avec artisme, avec plaisanterie, professionnellement, d'une façon innovante ou bien n'importe comment, sans engagement, négligemment ou même dans l'angoisse. Il y a tout une gamme de possibilités qui se dessinent devant la personne agissante. Autant qu'il n'y a pas de créativité possible face aux normes qui excluent certains actes – qualifiés de péchés, autant il y a de la place pour la créativité face à l'acte. Alors le fonctionnement de la raison ne se limite pas au jugement rendu par la raison pratique que nous appelons conscience. Après le jugement de la conscience il y a encore de la place pour le choix libre où la raison agit de nouveau ensemble avec la volonté et ces deux facultés s'influencent mutuellement. Elles peuvent en plus, être animées par la passion vitale, la fantaisie et l'imagination, se servir des capacités acquises, donc profiter de la dynamique émotionnelle et corporelle. La morale ne se limite pas au jugement qui porte sur la qualification morale de l'acte prévu. Ce qui s'ajoute à l'éducation morale, c'est tout une richesse de la personnalité avec une sensibilité émotionnelle et physique qui doit aussi contribuer à l'acte, et cela de façon créative. En plus, dans la

perspective de la foi vive, ce qui intègre toutes les forces qui contribuent à l'acte, c'est l'amour surnaturel qui permet de se lier d'amitié avec Dieu et avec les gens à cause de Dieu.

Ingéniosité créative

La formation d'un caractère mûr demande non seulement une formation de la conscience pour qu'elle se prononce avec vérité sur la qualification morale des actes. Il faut encore une ingéniosité créative qu'il est nécessaire de former. L'arétologie classique décrivait cette ingéniosité par le terme « prudence », mais dans les siècles modernes, quand on a rétréci la perspective morale en mettant l'accent sur le devoir, la signification de ce mot a changé et aujourd'hui il fait penser à la précaution donnée par quelqu'un qui se tient à distance, qui n'est pas engagé directement et ne sait même pas trop de quoi s'agit-il. Rien d'étonnant alors que la formation de cette vertu cardinale ait disparu. Quant à la synthèse de théologie morale de saint Thomas, elle ne fait que mentionner la conscience, assez brièvement, mais elle consacre beaucoup de place à la prudence qu'il faudrait traduire comme "ingéniosité créative". Cette ingéniosité, étant une vertu générale, dynamise la créativité sur le champ de toutes les autres vertus, y compris celle de l'amour surnaturel. Sa tâche consiste à rendre l'homme capable de se ressaisir et de se mobiliser pour concrétiser avec invention le bien reconnu comme tel. C'est pourquoi on l'appelait traditionnellement le "charretier des vertus" *auriga virtutum*. L'homme vraiment vertueux nous surprend sans cesse par son invention, parce qu'il ne fonctionne pas par stéréotypes, mais il sait reconnaître des nouveaux défis, il réagit aux situations que les autres n'ont pas notés, et il sait offrir généreusement son temps à la tâche qu'il a reconnue. La formation de cette "ingéniosité créative" est la plus importante dans la formation du caractère. La cause principale de la fuite devant la vérité dans le nihilisme et le relativisme moral c'est l'incapacité de s'engager, ou même

la conviction que la façon d'agir de manière responsable et avec invention est incongrue, car il faut suivre toujours les règles de conduite imposées par les autres. L'homme qui ne sait pas se mettre à l'action qui ne lui est pas imposée, mais qui vaut la peine, même si sa conscience reconnaît la vérité de la situation donnée, cet homme fuit volontiers cette vérité, car il voit qu'elle est exigeante. Et c'est alors qu'il essaie de remplacer la lumière de la conscience par des excuses, par des idéologies inventées qui proclament que la vérité est inconnaissable, qu'il n'existe que des opinions chancelantes, subjectives et toujours changeantes. L'homme dépourvu de la vertu de l'ingéniosité créative bien formée, fuyant la vérité morale, est puis comme une feuille flottant au vent, car il manque de force morale.

Le masque des principes


Revenons aux observations sur la société polonaise faites par ceux qui se sont trouvés à l'étranger et font une comparaison. Il faut considérer leur réflexe psychique qui les fait jouir de leur liberté intérieure, comme sain, même s'il n'est pas formé ni orienté vers la vérité et qu'il peut parfois faire fausse route. Là où l'éducation traditionnelle n'impose pas trop de règles, non seulement un fonctionnaire, mais aussi un instituteur, un médecin ou un soldat auront en vue le bien des gens qu'ils servent, et au nom de ce bien ils iront avec invention au-delà des procédures imposées à leur métier, pour atteindre ce qui sert vraiment le bien des autres. Dans des sociétés saines ce ne sont pas les procédures établies par les législateurs ou les bureaucrates qui décident du comportement des gens, mais l'éthos du groupe professionnel, transmis de génération en génération, l'éthos qui se construit au fil de nouveaux défis. Malheureusement par suite de l'élargissement des compétences des états et des entités supranationales et à cause de la bureaucratisation de toutes les dimensions de la vie, la responsabilité des individus disparaît peu à peu et les gens

de caractère sont de plus en plus rares. Si un médecin ne peut pas se laisser guider par son expérience et son intuition, mais uniquement par des procédures établies par la loi, ou bien si l'instituteur ne peut pas serrer contre soi un enfant qui pleure ou encore s'il doit faire attention de ne pas toucher le corps de l'enfant en pansant son genou écorché, car c'est ce qu'exigent les règlements dont l'évitement menace de poursuites, c'est alors que la responsabilité morale individuelle disparaît et on en vient à la déshumanisation des relations humaines.

Dans les contacts réciproques les gens libres entretiennent des relations normales où l'on s'échange les opinions, où il y a de la place pour partager les expériences, pour le rencontre des différents points de vue. S'exposer à la critique ne signifie pas en même temps qu'il faut renoncer aux valeurs confessés. L'éducation qui met en valeur l'aspect créatif des vertus mène à une attitude ouverte envers les autres. Si cela manque et qu'il ne reste que l'apologie de l'ordre morale, on génère des individus raides qui se cachent facilement sous un masque des principes, des convenances et des persuasions souvent irrationnelles à propos de ce qu'il convient ou de ce qu'il ne convient pas. Au fond, il ne peut y avoir d'échange véritable entre les personnes et on reste enfermé dans son milieu hermétique. On élève alors les règles de comportement social au rang des principes moraux presque suprêmes, ce qu'elles ne méritent pas du tout. Si dans l'éducation morale on mettait un accent plus fort sur la formation de caractère, sur l'invention libre et responsable face au bien, est-ce que la générosité de l'amour évangélique ne serait-elle pas plus visible dans le monde? |

Traduction: **Aleksandra Wiśniewska**

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*Psychology
and Faith*



Just like any other feeling

Anger is not an opposite of intimacy. Even our loved ones can sometimes frustrate us, for they cannot fulfill all our needs.

Mateusz Łuksza O.P. speaks to
psychotherapist ANDRZEJ WIŚNIEWSKI

What is anger?

Anger is a very important feeling. Thanks to anger we can set boundaries, take care of ourselves, demand to be treated better, claim our rights, tell our loved ones that we do not like what they do and care for them in that way. We can tell them that we get angry at some things they do, so they could change their behaviour. In our culture anger is regarded as a bad feeling that makes our life more difficult. In my opinion, it is not quite true. It is hard to imagine life without anger and without expressing anger, even though telling other people that we are angry may cause conflicts or attack on our self-esteem.

Why do we get angry?

We can feel angry from our very early years. Let us just look at small children showing their anger and protest. They build their identity and get some control over their lives in this way. This is particularly true in the teenage years, when young

people separate from their parents to take care of their own lives. Sometimes they do it by showing off or by doing something silly to annoy their parents.

Inability to express one's anger is very often an underlying cause of many problems in building relationship with a partner and with the world. Adult men who, as teenagers, did not confront with their peers can have problems in relationships where assertiveness is crucial. Inability to express anger may result in depression. It can also lead to serious marital problems.

What kind of problems?

They vary from sexual problems to psychosomatic illnesses. Also, anger expressed in an unhealthy way can result in an unrealistic image of the person we are related to. So when we have an argument, we tend to tell each other things that normally would be never said. Marital quarrels can open such levels of communication, that are not available for us in everyday life. If well managed, they can be a chance for better understanding – they can inform us what bothers our partner. They can protect us against long-lasting, destructive silent non-communication, which is the ideal way to build unrealistic, anxiety-based fantasies about our partner.

So you want to tell us, that where is intimacy, there is always anger?

Yes, of course, because anger is not the opposite of intimacy. Even our loved ones can frustrate us from time to time. They cannot fulfill all our needs. There is a paradox, which often happens during therapy sessions, when quarrel is the only way to reach some kind of intimacy. But it is really devastating if anger is the only way of expressing closeness between people.

If I care for someone, I tell them about my negative feelings, but at the same time I want to hear from them what they do not like in my behaviour. This is the way how my partner

protects me against destructive fantasies about their behaviour and the way of protecting myself against my partner's fantasies about me.

So we can express our anger in a bad and in a good way?

Of course. There is a very destructive kind of anger where criticism and blaming other people dominates. Such anger is not a sign that you care for someone. It serves one purpose: to get power over somebody and prove that I am the more important one, so I have the right of imposing my wants and demands on the other person. Sometimes parents do this to their children. Constant criticism is their way of showing love and care for the children.

But when I say to somebody: 'I do not want to hurt you, but I do not like this or that in your behaviour, I show that I care about this person'.

Some people often say that their life is a failure, they cannot change themselves, their job is rubbish, they do not have enough strength, etc. When I hear something like that, I feel they have an anger problem, but they do not realise they are actually angry.

Many people have been raised with a mindset that it is wrong to feel angry and it is wrong to express anger. We try to live up to this way of thinking. If bottled up, anger can be destructive. It leads to bitterness, to the lack of energy for fighting difficulties. It also results in helplessness, that manifests itself in inability to do anything, because it is beyond one's power. A denied anger very often leads to depression, when our sense of agency shrinks or nearly disappears. Thanks to anger we can conquer the world, for instance in our sex life.

So let's stick to sex, because I think sexual problems are connected with anger problems. If we fail to express our anger properly, what consequences does it have for our sex life?

I do not mean we should be angry at our partner's sexual behaviour. However, it is important to set boundaries to avoid any abuse and to build sexual relationship in a way that is good and safe for us. There is no sex without desire and to desire someone means to cross someone's boundaries. There is a very good definition of a well-managed desire: 'Know how far is too far'. Therefore, it is definitely possible to desire things that for my partner can be hard to accept. The same situation can happen when I try to attract a potential partner's attention or when I fight with the other love rivals.

Anger helps us to take risks to change our behaviour. Expressing our anger gives us a feel of independence. Life is very tough for those, who are unable to say, that something makes them angry or that they do not like something. The same happens in relationships. If I can tell my partner that I do not like something, I feel I am somebody significant for them, I have the power to make decisions and influence my partner. Often partners are afraid of being angry at each other. They build their relationship in a way that does not allow their anger to be expressed. It usually happens to women. They do not show their anger. They would rather try to deserve their partner's approval. Also, they try to change anger for feel of hurt, which is much more socially acceptable, therefore easier to express. It may lead to disaster, because men do not value such kind of women. On the other hand, men who fear confrontation can become overprotective. In order to get much valued acceptance, they try to fulfill all partner's needs, they do not set any boundaries and they do not care for their independence. They do not say: 'I want to be with you, but we are different'. They do not realise the wonderful rule which says: The level of love dictates the level of freedom.

You say that anger gives us a lot of energy, but in our culture it often implies feel of guilt. For instance, when we shout or say harsh words angrily, we feel guilty straight away.

This problem has a lot of reasons, one of them is Christian tradition, according to which expressing anger is a sin. For instance, the Gospel story about Jesus expelling traders from the Temple, has, in my opinion, been left unsaid in the Catholic Church. But it is a classic example of how the great Man uses his anger. He uses his anger to send a message: 'It mustn't be like this'. I have an impression that for ages in Christianity, Jesus has been shown as an ideal man, carer and counsellor, who loves and sacrifices himself, who is gentle and calm. Very rarely or never we see in him a man who was able to feel anger. But when Jesus defends a harlot, he says: 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.' So he confronts woman's prosecutors, he makes a good use of his anger and dissatisfaction. The members of the Catholic Church do not talk much about that. Expressing anger goes hand in hand with the feel of guilt in the Church, therefore anger has become sinful.

But still, we can show our anger in a way that allows other people get information which is important for them. They do not have to feel hurt and stigmatized by our anger.

Matching anger and guilt together is also a part of a certain parenting style. According to it, only adults can make all judgments. Their children are told that they cannot express their opinions and judgments until they grow up. What are the consequences? Parents lose the only place where they and their child can be partners. This place is in the area of feelings. When a child is angry, most parents are outraged and they say: 'How could you talk to me like that, you little sod!'. A parent cannot be a partner for a child in any other field. A parent knows better what is important, what is valuable, etc. Only my anger and my child's anger are 'a partner experience for both of us'. We do not need any practice here, we just feel angry. Instead of meeting our child on the emotional level, we want to be in charge again and so we make impossible for our child to express their various feelings and needs.

I believe there are many kinds of anger and many reasons to be angry.

Of course. We feel angry when something does not go as it should go or when things that make us feel we live a good life are denied or broken. The example of Christ expelling traders from the Temple fits well here.

There is also anger rooted in our frustrations. For instance, when my neighbour has better life than me, I am trying to put the skids under him. This kind of anger is related to jealousy and it is destructive, not nurturing. It robs me of my strength.

Another kind of anger comes from the fact that I have been badly treated and my boundaries have been violated. This kind of anger can be creative. I can turn it into energy and use this energy to change my situation. I can express my anger in two ways. I can do it directly when I talk about my anger or through so called passive aggression. For example, a wife tells her husband to wash the dishes. The husband feels angry at that, but he does not say a word. He starts dishwashing and suddenly he lets go of a plate and it smashes. So the wife takes over dishwashing. It is very difficult to react to such kind of anger, because it has been hidden behind awkwardness and helplessness.

Let us talk again about how to acknowledge our anger. It is perhaps easier with other feelings. When I am happy, I feel strong. Sadness overwhelms me. But how can I recognise that I am angry?

It often shows through the body, when we have recurrent headaches or palpitations. It is called psychosomatics and it happens when hidden emotional conflicts manifest themselves through bodily symptoms. Some people, when facing conflict, suddenly lose their energy or even fall asleep to numb any feelings. It means they experience a strong feeling, but they do not let themselves acknowledge it. After all, it is not normal to fall asleep when somebody is being attacked. Sometimes anger is hidden behind irritability or uncertainty. Very often,

it is hidden behind feel of hurt, for to feel hurt is more acceptable than to feel angry.

Sometimes our anger is overexpressed. For example, somebody tells me off for something insignificant, but I react aggressively. Then both of us feel we are out of proportion with our anger.

– I think this is a situation where somebody has difficulties with expressing anger, so anger gets bottled up and suddenly bursts out. Then the smallest thing can cause a waterfall of criticism. Another possibility is that we deal with a narcissistic personality, as it is called in psychological diagnostics. Such people often can overreact with anger even at gentle behaviour if it violates their self-image. Anger protects them against the dangerous dissonance between their real and ideal self-image. It serves as a barrier for information, which can disturb the balance between those self-images. It is also a message: 'Be careful, if you try to criticize me, I may ruin you.' Now, you can see clearly how fragile a narcissist's self-image is.

How can we defend ourselves from such attack?

People with strong self-esteem realise that such attack of anger has nothing to do with their behaviour. They feel this is their attacker's problem, so they can still rely on themselves. They can tell the attacker: 'You have gone too far, I do not like the way you react when I am trying to tell you something in a kind way.' But people with low self-esteem can become dominated or even devastated by such anger. They immediately start to look for the reasons of that anger in themselves, although they had not done anything wrong. They think: 'I must have done something if he was so madly furious'. Victims of violence often feel like that. If somebody yells at me, I crouch and I instantly assume that I had done something wrong.

We have said that expressing our anger can result in positive energy in our life. But how can we learn to express our anger properly? Which stage of life is the most important here?
Each of them, but childhood in particular.

I doubt there are many parents who teach their children how to cope with anger...

No, parents mostly do not teach that. Many of them did not see a lot of situations where anger was expressed in a good way, that is why they are not good teachers. Most of them feel threatened when their children tell them about their anger, because they think they will lose their parental authority if they let children do that. I do not think I had ever met the parents who said: 'I am glad that you, my son, said that you are angry at me.' or 'It is good you tell me about your dislikes and dissatisfactions.'

But it is crucial for children to learn how to talk about their anger, dissatisfaction and resentment. It protects them from accumulating unspoken anger, that can turn into an opinion that 'I am a bad child if, in spite of my parents telling me not to, I let myself be angry, so I am hurting my loving parents.'

How to cope with anger?

First of all it is necessary to understand and accept that when I am angry, it does not mean I am a bad man. Anger is just like any other feeling. It is important though what I do with it, how I express it. It has been tested, especially in psychotherapy that if a someone shy and cowed takes a risk to show their anger, people start to like and appreciate them.

We are often angry at our parents. We know that we should respect, love and care for them, but on the other hand we do not always manage to do that. Then we get angry and we immediately feel guilty.

It can happen to someone who has separation problems. For example they have an obligation to visit their parents showing them their love by doing that. Those parents are afraid of being abandoned and not important any more for the children, so they try to appeal to various kind of rules or norms and force their children to behave in the way they consider appropriate. They can say: ' You should care for us, we did so much for you. You should come to see us.' They try to make them feel guilty, which is very close to anger. If we often make the other person feel that way, we should not be surprised, that they often get angry at us. Children, also the adult ones, express such anger by avoiding their parents and finding excuses for not visiting them: work overload, tough times. This kind of behaviour reinforces parents' fears again.

But a guilty feeling does not have to be a negative thing. Could you explain a difference between a good feel of guilt and the one that is harmful and would need to be 'acted out' in some way?

There is a bright side of guilt. We often hurt others whether we want it or not. If I feel guilty when I hurt someone, then my feel of guilt can be very positive. I can apologize, I can admit my mistake and try to correct it. I can experience that I am not perfect and that is OK. But when I am constantly feeling guilty, because I think everything I do is wrong and hurtful, I can get angry very quickly. Guilt is a result of various norms that I apply to myself, including ideal and unrealistic ones. So I am feeling guilty and unhappy all the time, I do not match up to other people's expectations and I am still feeling that I hurt somebody. That must make me frustrated. Therefore, I am in a vicious cycle, for when I feel angry, I believe that I hurt people even more, so I would better bottle this anger up. But accumulated anger causes fear, so I am starting to fear more and more, that I will hurt the others with my negative feelings. Eventually, the accumulated anger bursts out with

aggression. The vicious cycle is then complete, because my aggression confirms my negative self-image.

How to break the vicious cycle?

We get trapped into the vicious cycle when we want to get too much control over our anger, because we are afraid of other people's reactions. To break it we need to give ourselves the right to express our anger and accept that nobody is perfect. |

Translation: **Jolanta Brózda-Wiśniewska, Daniel Wiśniewski**

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Personal Guide to Fasting



Le jeûne aux frutti di mare

Aux Etats Unis on a réalisé des études dont il résulte que ceux qui mangent des aliments jugés malsains-voir: qui font grossir sont regardés comme immoraux alors que ceux qui mangent les aliments sains en apparence ne faisant pas grossir approchent la sainteté.

Avec WOJCIECH NOWICKI parle Anna Sosnowska

Quel est le plus exquis des souvenirs du votre palais?

C'étaient plutôt des séjours complets et non un plat. Les séjours dans les endroits étonnants qui m'ont appris à regarder différemment la nourriture.

Différemment, alors comment ?

Consentant aux choses auxquelles chez nous on ne consente pas. Il est sûr que les séjours dans les Indes étaient tels. Certains s'interrogent: "Pourquoi j'y irai ? Il y a la saleté, il fait chaud."

On peut s'y intoxiquer.

Mais les Indes sont un pays des mets délicieux en particulier végétariens, quoiqu'aussi carnés. Il y existe une excellente cuisine musulmane remplie de viande de mouton et des poulets desquels nous n'avons pas rêvé. Quoique chez nous aussi depuis peu ils commencent à apparaître ceux qui ont quelque chose en commun avec la viande. J'en ai trouvé.

Combien coûte un kilogramme ?

Raisonnablement, ce qui veut dire environ 20 zloty. De Podlasie. Excellent. A coup sûr une importante sensation culinaire à plusieurs fois était l'Italie. Mais la première bien évidemment la France- de nombreux séjours, le travail dans les restaurants de là-bas. Cela apprend à regarder la cuisine.

Qu'est-ce que manger pour vous à part de pouvoir satisfaire l'un des besoins fondamentaux de l'homme?

Pour moi manger c'est ma nature. Comme les gens qui regardant une portée lisent si ceci est bon ou mauvais, moi, c'est en lisant un livre de cuisine que je comprends ce qui en ressort. Me promenant sur le marché j'associe en un clin d'œil des dizaines des ingrédients. C'est pourquoi que dans mon métier de base qui consiste à écrire des comptes-rendus critiques sur des restaurants, souvent je suis si méchant.

Parce qu'ils servent des si mauvais plats?

Oui.

Est-ce que manger peut devenir une vraie passion?

Bien évidemment.

De quelle manière cela se révèle-t-il ?

Dans mon livre "*Stol jaki jest. Wokol kuchni w Polsce*"¹, j'écris l'histoire d'un jeune homme qui étant ivre avait avoué que la cuisine était pour lui meilleure que le sexe. Il l'avait exprimé d'une telle manière qu'il serait difficile de mieux faire. Pour les personnes qui s'occupent de la cuisine réellement, elle peut devenir le sexe de nos jours. D'ailleurs veuillez regarder sur ce qu'il se passe avec la cuisine par l'internet- n'importe qui veut avoir quelque chose à dire à ce propos...

... il crée un blog...

...il photographie ce qu'il mangerait ou ce qu'il ne mangerait pas. C'est nouveau car jadis la cuisine était une affaire intime ne quittant jamais les quatre murs de la cuisine.

Alors qu'est-ce qu'il nous est arrivé ?

Ce n'est pas que nous mais le monde entier avait changé. Le monde avait décidé à un certain moment que la cuisine est une affaire prioritaire car il y a plusieurs choses qui nous mettent en danger: ce que nous deviendrons gros, que nos foies croîtront au travers etc. Par ailleurs le monde s'était détourné, il me le semble, des autres affaires, ainsi il lui devient plus facile de se concentrer sur la cuisine.

De quelles affaires?

Mais des affaires spirituelles, évidemment.

La cuisine, est-elle un substitut de la spiritualité?

Certainement oui.

Le fait de manger, a-t-il en soi quelque chose de "divin"?

Il y arrive. Manger peut être grandiose, peut être un art. Cependant nous le rencontrons si rarement.

Auriez-vous eu autrefois cette sensation?

Oui. C'était quand je mangeais le bœuf à la française préparé par ma sœur. Même seuls les petits oignons, elle les faisait frire une heure.

Les échalotes, [*do cholery*]², et non les petits oignons.

Moi, j'ai vécu ce ressenti plusieurs fois dans ma vie d'où ma conviction que je SAIS. On me pose souvent la question d'où me vient cette conviction que je sais que ceci est somptueux mais pas cela?

Nous voilà, mais peut être vous ne faites qu'un semblant d'avoir des connaissances en cuisine?

Mais d'où vous vient votre conviction, madame, que vous savez écrire? Pourquoi Franz Kafka était un excellent écrivain mais Janusz Przymanowski ne l'était plus? Or, voilà qu'ils existent des certains outils lesquels on peut apprendre à fond, en plus il existe quelque chose que nous appelons mystérieusement le talent. Sauf que dans la cuisine ce talent s'appelle en général le travail, le travail, le travail. Tout comme dans l'écriture.

Le fait que nous vivons de plus en plus avertis, a-t-il en soi quelque chose de l'hédonisme?

Si. Et tout de suite je vais me contredire car j'aime ça. Quelque part j'écris dans mon livre que nous-le peuple, nous sommes un peu différents de l'image de nous-mêmes de nos pensées et de nos paroles. Car nous aimons penser et parler de nous-mêmes comme suit: "Nous sommes de plus en plus avertis, nous mangeons ces crevettes, nos sœurs apprennent à cuisiner d'une façon merveilleuse, nous touchons le paradis". Mais hélas, ce n'est pas la vérité.

Quelle est donc la vérité?

Que nous-le peuple, nous vivons aussi à la campagne et que par contrainte ou par l'habitude nous mangeons de très mauvaises choses. Nous-le peuple, nous aimons le plus *notre escalope de porc panée*[schabowy]*³, ce qui était apparu dans les dernières études.

Nous-le peuple, nous adorons le chou et certainement ceci ne va pas changer nos vies durant car nous le trouvons à notre goût. Puis, quand on ne saisit même pas des livres de cuisine mais des modestes descriptions du notre passé alimentaire dans les journaux intimes ou dans la littérature classique, il s'avère que depuis toujours nous aimions manger gras. On ne peut pas s'étonner, de notre fenêtre nous voyons la neige, souvent il pleut.

Et nous, contemporains, au lieu de cretons nous essayons de nous rassasier de la roquette.

Oui, nous consommons cette roquette dans les grandes villes, quand nous en avons des moyens, mais habituellement il nous est toujours possible d'acheter un chou.

Qu'est-ce que vous avez contre un chou ou contre une escalope de porc panée?

Un chou c'est OK, mais une côte de porc panée est nulle. Le meilleur plat du chou dans ma maison s'appelle [*bigos*]⁴ indien. C'est un mets très ancien, le plus somptueux des plats des choux que je connais, un mets végétarien. Nous ne sommes pas obligés de manger sans arrêt le *auquel nous trouvons des morceaux ou des restes de viande et la choucroute*. Regardant d'une perspective en masse, nous ne sommes pas ouverts aux goûts étrangers.

Eh bien, dans le domaine culinaire nous sommes craintifs et méfiants, mais il me semble qu'ils y entrent en jeu aussi des questions économiques. Si par exemple je voudrais apprécier les goûts indiens, alors que pour un dîner dans un bon restaurant je paierai un billet de cent zloty.⁵

De temps en temps même si cela paraît cruel, il nous faut dépenser de l'argent pour nous nourrir. Une bonne cuisine coûte. Même le savoir que l'on emploie pour préparer une bonne nourriture vaut un prix. Les gens que je considère comme d'excellents cuisiniers ont passé toute leur vie d'abord à nettoyer les casseroles dans les restaurants et puis à monter l'échelle. Cela les a coûté exactement leur vie. Et il faut le leur payer. Vous n'êtes pas obligée de dépenser un billet de cent, cela peut faire moins. Vous n'êtes pas forcée d'y aller chaque semaine ni même chaque mois. De temps en temps nous nous achetons un livre, de temps en temps nous regardons un film que nous payons d'une façon ou d'une autre, de temps en temps nous allons manger quelque chose de bon. Ainsi, de cette manière est créée notre connaissance.

Quand j'ai été en train de lire *Stol, jaki jest*⁶ un fragment en particulier m'a très intéressée, celui où vous parlez d'un transfert d'éthique du rayon du sexe dans un rayon de la cuisine. De quoi il y s'agit-il ?

Aux Etats Unis on a réalisé des études dont il résulte que ceux qui mangent les aliments jugés comme malsains- voir: qui font grossir- sont considérés comme immoraux, cependant que ceux qui mangent les aliments en apparence sains et ne faisant pas grossir s'approchent de la sainteté. Ce qui y est étrange c'est que l'échantillon analysé se composait des étudiants en ethnologie, donc, comme il semblerait, des personnes averties. Cela veut dire qu'aujourd'hui, quand nous parlons de la cuisine alors nous parlons de la moralité car manger est associé au plaisir.

A une honte aussi ?

Oui, car une honte concerne ce qui est mauvais. Manger un hamburger reste une affaire obscure dans les certaines sphères. On ne donne pas des hamburgers ni d'autres mets leurs semblables aux enfants, et/ou au moins on n'en parle pas. Je me souviens d'un premier McDonald à Cracovie lequel, bien évidemment a connu un succès invraisemblable. A Varsovie et à Moscou ça se passait à l'identique.

Aller au McDonald ne constitue-t-il pas un substitut d'une visite dans un bon restaurant? Nous y allons car nous ne pouvons pas nous payer un bon restaurant. Franchement parlant, voir les familles qui passent au McDo pour le déjeuner du dimanche m'épouvante un peu. Mais peut être que moi-même maintenant je me comporte comme un faux gardien de la moralité ...

Alors, imaginez-vous, madame, que vous venez d'une petite commune.

Je suis originaire d'une petite ville.

Alors, madame, imaginez-vous maintenant vos anciens voisins et tentez de voir s'ils se trouveraient à l'aise dans un des restaurants qui reçoivent les prix.

Beaucoup, ils seraient intimidés et ne sauraient pas quoi en faire.

Nos restaurants excellent à garder ces personnes devant la porte, les méprisant. Nos restaurants en majorité sont malpolis. Cela vient-t-il du fait qu'il n'y a pas d'un personnel adéquat. *Al'Ouest*⁷ un serveur ou un chef d'une salle ce sont des métiers pour toute une vie, et dont on peut être fiers. Chez nous ce sont des emplois temporaires que l'on méprise. Qu'est-ce qu'on peut attendre de ces personnes arrivant d'une province ? Elles se sentent bien mieux au McDonald. Ah! Ca y est. La prochaine génération fera autrement.

Revenons aux grandes villes. Nous y cherchons pertinemment des magasins ou des points de vente de mets préparés »maison« à emporter dans les emballages en polystyrène... C'est parce que nous considérons que la cuisine »maison« est la meilleure du monde et, comme on le sait, au restaurant on ne peut pas l'avoir.

Mais Magda Gessler dit que justement au restaurant la cuisine devrait être si bonne comme chez maman.

...

Vous vous êtes tus. Pourquoi ?

Je m'abstiens du commentaire. Sans aucun doute qu'il est questions de la cuisine de chez maman à condition que cette maman faisait une excellente cuisine. Parce qu'il y a aussi des mamans qui cuisinent mal ou qui ne cuisinent pas du tout. Je connais des personnes élevées par une maman qui s'appelait La Cantine. La cuisine "maison" c'est un rêve de toute évidence, le rêve d'un songe-creux Rapportons-nous aux faits. Où vous mangez votre journée durant ?

Je ne cours à la cantine de la firme que pour la salade car les autres mets sont plutôt indigestes.

Voilà, vous avez ainsi exaucé votre rêve de la cuisine “maison”. Moi, d’habitude je mange mal, et quand je dispose d’un peu de temps alors je me fais la cuisine. Et c’est ma manière, quoiqu’un peu lointaine de l’idéal, d’exaucer ce rêve.

Et la faim? Est-ellebonne?

Elle est fantastique. Nous ne devrions manger que quand nous ressentons une petite faim. Sinon cela n’a pas de sens.

Le goût est meilleur ?

Bien sur. C’est comme en général dans la vie. Une satiété tue la joie. Car à quoi bon sert à un riche d’avoir encore plus d’argent ? Peut être que cela le stimulerait encore mais en principe ceci ne change en rien la situation de sa vie. Dans la cuisine c’est pareil. C’est un moment merveilleux de faire la cuisine, quand on ressent une faim, quand on sait approximativement à quel moment le plat sera prêt....

Et le jeûne ?

Notre jeûne n’existe plus. J’ai comptabilisé les jours du jeûne, nous ne les avons presque plus. Il est difficile de prétendre si c’est bien, si c’est mal, d’ailleurs moi, je ne suis pas un moralisateur du comportement alimentaire. Jadis notre jeûne se rapprochait aux jeûnes orthodoxes. Au moyen âge nous avions eu plus que 190 jours du jeûne obligatoires. A cela s’ajoutaient les jeûnes libres de choix, liés par exemple aux veillées des fêtes des saints les plus populaires. Ceci représente plus que 50 jours. Il en résulte des comptes qu’il restait un tiers de l’année pour manger normalement. Bien sur notre religion s’était adaptée aux situations quand il n’y avait pas quoi mettre dans la casserole. Nos jeûnes pour les paysans étaient vraiment très contraignants.

Sans aucun doute contrairement aux jeûnes des châtelains ?

Les jeûnes des châtelains avaient été gras, l'alcool avait été permis donc je suppose qu'il y avait aussi de la joie. Puis on demandait souvent à alléger au moins un peu ce jeûne. Il existe dans la littérature un mets très célèbre lequel on servait durant le jeûne, notamment *la queue du castor*. Comme nous le savons, un castor n'est pas un poisson, mais on avait considéré jadis que puisque sa queue se trouvait dans l'eau une majorité du temps alors elle était comme un poisson. Puis, on admettait de bonne foi la déclaration du cuisinier, ce qui était assez marron car il lui arrivait de frire les poissons dans le gras sur des lardons malgré qu'on ne permettait que le gras végétale durant le jeûne.

Dans un de vos textes vous appelez le jeûne contemporain d'un nom "Le jeûne frutti di mare".

C'est une manière très typique de jeûner et de murmurer un végétarisme. Ceci nous fait nous apercevoir ainsi: nous ne faisons pas de mal aux animaux en mangeant les poissons et les fruits de mer, puis nous jeûnons en mangeant les crevettes et les calamars.

Supposant qu'aujourd'hui, dans ces circonstances et dans notre époque quelqu'un voudrait s'investir sérieusement dans le jeûne, qu'est-ce qu'il devrait faire ?

Mais il n'y a pas grand-chose à faire. Savez-vous, madame, combien il y a de ces jeûnes ? Si quelqu'un va communier, alors déjà à chaque fois cela le coûte une heure. Puis, nous avons les vendredis, le jeûne du Carême.

Le mercredi des Cendres, le vendredi Saint...

Mais ces jours du jeûne strict sont déjà allégés dans un sens car ils ne sont obligatoires que pour les personnes âgées de 18 à 60 ans. Alors une section de vie durant laquelle nous devons si souffrir n'est pas si grande. Ce jeûne essaye de s'adapter à notre temps mais il semblerait que cela ne lui réussit pas car

je n'ai pas remarqué à ce que qui que ce soit s'y sentait très concerné. Regardons-le d'une perspective plus large. Quand on a vu une apparition sur le marché du régime de monsieur D...

...Dukana...

...c'est alors que dans les nombreux restaurants on a vu apparaître dans les cartes des menus des post-compléments avec le régime de monsieur D. Tant de femmes avaient commencé de l'appliquer car les femmes sont toujours les premières, et puis après c'étaient les hommes, voilà qu'il aurait été une vraie bêtise de ne pas en profiter. Mais, avez-vous déjà vu un jour, dans une carte des menus, un régime du jeûne ?

Non.

Voilà notre réponse à la question : de quelle façon les gens se sentent concernés par le jeûne aujourd'hui.

Est-ce que ça fait du bien de se laisser aller du temps en temps à une gourmandise ?

C'est un sport très dangereux. Je viens de finir un texte sur Balzac qui écrivait sur la cuisine des quantités invraisemblables. Lui qui ne mangeait presque rien quand il créait, après avoir fini une œuvre se goinfrait tellement qu'il est même difficile d'en croire. Et les gens l'ont regardé comme un étrange de phénomènes.

Mais peut être nous nous goinfrons car nous ne savons pas festoyer ?

Nous festoyons très mal. Nous ne savons pas nous comporter convenablement à table, nous ne savons au mieux que dire que quelque chose est juste bon ou mauvais. Mais ceci est un maximum de nos possibilités. Je parle de nouveau de tous ce qu'il concerne une certaine moyenne sociale. Le dîner des Italiens est deux voir trois fois plus long que le nôtre, et il est si surprenant qu'ils mangent autant étant donné leurs silhouettes. Mais eux, ils causent en buvant le vin. Et nous, nous nous

comportons comme des gourmands très typiques. Hélas, avec la nourriture tous ce passent comme ils se passent pour toutes autres choses: il faut l'apprécier, en parler, la décomposer. Et nos mets traditionnels ne s'y prêtent pas. Car comment peut-on parler *d'une escalope de porc panée* ?

Meh...

Eh quoi ?

Une escalope de porc panée peut être tendre ou non, juteuse ou sèche, si quelqu'un a de la fantaisie, alors il peut l'envelopper dans une double panière, l'escalope frite dans le beurre elle a un goût différent que celle frite dans l'huile... Je fais mon possible, veuillez l'apprécier.

Je l'apprécie mais tout est un peu comme ça. Malgré qu'ils existent quelques plats somptueux dans notre cuisine, ils ont été tués à coup de poing par le train-train quotidien. Je ne m'imagine pas d'une discussion polonaise au sujet des raviolis, des pommes de terre ou des certaines soupes.

Pensez-vous que l'avenir de la cuisine des Polonais est clair ?

Plus lumineux que le passé. Nous avons derrière nous un trou gastronomique qui, à mes yeux a gardé toujours une certaine continuité. On nous en parle beaucoup des livres de cuisine. Le premier trou commence durant la I guerre mondiale. J'ai un livret de cette époque, "*Tania kuchnia na ciezkie czasy*"⁸. Il est merveilleux. Puis, une brèche suivante, notamment la II guerre mondiale, quand il y avait une éruption des livres présentant des plats du chou et des pommes de terre. Tout de suite après avait commencé le temps cruel, quand on ne manquait pas que des ingrédients pour pouvoir créer une bonne cuisine, mais aussi, on y manquait de la volonté, car il fallait à tout prix d'essayer de préserver sa vie plutôt que de penser aux grands plaisirs. Nous gardons donc derrière nous des plusieurs de dizaines d'années d'une mauvaise cuisine.

Dans quelle direction nous dérivons actuellement ?

Voyons celle que nous avons déjà prise car elle nous indique aussi quelque chose d'important. Nous avons aujourd'hui un étrange mélange de la cuisine polonaise la plus traditionnelle – notamment du [zur]⁹, [barszcz]¹⁰, des pommes de terre, de la viande de porc le plus souvent et du chou, avec la cuisine qui fait semblant d'être italienne. Ceci nous offre d'une part un res-sentiment d'une certaine sécurité matérielle, d'autre part nous permet de découvrir le monde. Ils existent aussi des modes qui ne touchent qu'une partie de notre société. La cuisine japonaise est considérée comme légère, saine, donc est jugée morale mais beaucoup de gens en Pologne a un grand problème avec *sushi*.

Car manger de la viande crue même si c'était un poisson est inacceptable pour les personnes âgées. Cet alors nous faisons cuire ce poisson. En un mot, nous nous débrouillons comme nous le pouvons. | Translation: **Bożena Abeele-Kaczmarek**

¹ "La table telle qu'elle est. Autour de la cuisine en Pologne"

² do cholery: ici: une expression polonaise, une exclamation d'une vive opposition à un propos dit, écrit, pensé et/ou considéré comme q.ch. de nuisible, exprimée dans un langage très familier

³ schabowy: une escalope de porc panée, en Pologne servie très souvent et restant inconditionnellement très appréciée dans l'assiette des mets préférés des Polonais

⁴ bigos: un mets composé de la choucroute cuite ensemble avec de la viande, des épices, dans le même récipient et longtemps, ce qui lui procure un goût spécifique.

⁵ une monnaie polonaise

⁶ vide no. 1

⁷ sens figuratif et direction indiquant les pays se trouvant à l'ouest de la Pologne

⁸ "Une cuisine pas chère pour les temps difficiles"

⁹ zur: la soupe traditionnelle polonaise, aigrelette, à la base de seigle

¹⁰ barszcz: la soupe traditionnelle polonaise, existent: barszcz rouge (czerwony) – une soupe des légumes parmi lesquels figure la betterave rouge donnant la fameuse couleur rouge... Puis barszcz blanc (biały), une sorte du "zur" mais faite à la base de la farine de blé... la soupe "barszcz biały de Pâques" est cuite avec de la saucisse blanche épicée à la marjolaine qui lui donne un goût particulier et très appréciée des Polonais

WOJCIECH NOWICKI – né en 1968, critique culinaire, eseiste, photographe, écrit des comptes-rendus sur la cuisine des grands restaurants pour "Gazeta Wyborcza", publie des articles sur la cuisine et sur la photographie dans "Tygodnik Powszechny". L'auteur du livre "Stol, jaki jest. Wokol kuchni w Polsce".



Don't eat bacon, buy a cow

Among English and Welsh Catholics, ancient penitential practices are back. Is the Church digging in? Or is the sound pride of Catholic identity being born?

JOLANTA BRÓZDA-WIŚNIEWSKA

A full English breakfast. Its chief ingredients are bacon and eggs. However, it is not full if it lacks fried or grilled tomatoes, mushrooms, sausages, beans in tomato sauce, toast with marmalade and the obligatory tea with milk. After such a breakfast you can forget hunger for half a day or longer. As of 16 September 2011, about 2.5 million residents of England and Wales ought to ask themselves every Friday a Hamlet-type question: to eat or not to eat a full English breakfast? Or, perhaps, resign themselves to having porridge? For the bishops of England and Wales decided that on this day every Catholic should not eat any meat as a sign of penance and remembrance of Christ's death on the cross.

The English-speaking world is perfectly familiar with the concept of fish Friday. Already in the Middle Ages, the fish business in Britain was driven to a large extent by fasting practices. The fish burger at MacDonald's as well. It was marketed for the first time by a chain manager in Connecticut in 1962, who

observed that sales at his meat-only fast-food outlets dropped significantly on Fridays. So he started to put fish into bland hamburger rolls.

Meat-free for all

Of course, this text is not about the superiority of fish over meat but rather it attempts to describe what fasting has become for British Catholics in recent months. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and *Code of Canon Law* are not very specific on the question of fasting. In harmony with the penitential character of Fridays, you may abstain from eating meat, or other types of food, do a pious act or show mercy to another. Details are to be decided by Conferences of Bishops in individual countries. In 1985, in England and Wales, bishops ruled that Friday self-denial needed not concern meat, except for canonical Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. This can mean refraining from a selected type of food or entertainment. So what changed on September 16th? (*nota bene*: in England and Wales, and not in Scotland which has its own episcopate). What changed was that the practice of not eating meat became a rule for everybody to observe. There are exceptions, though: vegetarians are encouraged to deny themselves other types of food. Exceptions cover also children below the age of 14, adults more than 60 years old, the sick and pregnant women. The bishops announced the changes in May 2011. Comments abounded. “It’s a brilliant move, calculated to bind Catholics in England and Wales in an ancient observance many will remember as children. (...) the bishops believe Catholics are proud of their faith, and are ready to show it every week,” wrote Christina Odone, a columnist for the conservative *Daily Telegraph*. The leftist *Guardian*’s Annalisa Barbieri ironically remarked: “I know that lots of Catholics will be really happy about the re-establishment of this practice. It harks back to the past, and the past is a safe place for some Catholics, where homosexuals

didn't exist and women were quiet. The resumption has also been heralded as something that will unify Catholics; presumably wearing the guilt blazer isn't uniform enough".

Bishops write so people can understand

Journalists did their job well and the bishops did more than they had to. They spoke to their flocks in an easy and natural way. On the webpage of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, they had an easily downloadable FAQ file posted, providing answers to many questions. They were signed by the Secretary General of the Conference, Fr Marcus Stock. The questions which the bishops answered had been asked on the Internet forums of *The Catholic Herald*, *Daily Telegraph* or *The Guardian*. One of them can be summarized as follows: "With all that is happening in our society and our world, are there not more important things to be concentrating on? Why have the Bishops of England and Wales reintroduced this common act of penance now?" The bishops replied: "As shepherds of the Church (...) we are charged by Christ to read the 'signs of the times' and re-examine in each new age how the Church needs to respond to these issues and challenges". Among the "signs of the times" they count the fact that many people, especially the young, abstained from meat although they were not obliged to. It is also clear that many of us forget our obligation to do penance on a Friday, while abstaining from meat "is easy to remember (...) and although it is still an act of penitence, cannot be considered to put any real or substantial additional burden on the lives of the faithful". On the forum of *The Catholic Herald* there were also posts saying: "Why should the bishop tell me in detail how to do penance and maybe he will threaten me with hell for eating meat?" The bishops answer the question whether it is a sin to eat meat on a Friday. Do not worry, he who by mistake or even out of laziness

devours a slice of ham on a Friday does not sin gravely. A grave sin is committed when intentions are bad, when a person eats meat out of contempt for the rule and, consequently, for those who introduced it.

The pope changed us

Why did the new penitential rules enter into force on 16 September 2011? Here we touch the source of inspiration on which the bishops drew. It was on this very day that the first anniversary of Benedict XVI's pilgrimage to Britain fell. The pope arrived then in a country outraged by sexual scandals among the Catholic clergy and in a country where many complain about the members of the clergy: they are believed to be too liberal, passive and lacking in courage. The pilgrimage, however, passed peacefully. Surprisingly enough, the media spoke of an unaffected triumph of Benedict XVI.

For Clare Ward, who works for the Bishops' Conference in London, the papal pilgrimage was a memorable experience. "It was an indescribable, palpable experience of the Holy Spirit. It brought us joy and pride of being Catholics," Clare says. At work, she heads the Home Mission office responsible for missions and religious teaching at home. "The papal pilgrimage changed us. It made us aware of the treasures we have in the Church, of its heritage. Without this, it would be hard to understand why the bishops stressed the value of Friday penance. And this is part of our Catholic heritage," she adds.

When now Clare organizes sessions or lectures on Fridays as part of her work, she takes care that no meat is served. She has not heard any unfavourable comments on the decision to fast on Fridays. Instead, she heard from Catholic schools that they introduced no-meat Fridays in their cafeterias, despite the fact that children under 14 can have sausages or hamburgers on Fridays without a problem. For instance, the prestigious Independent Boarding Oratory School in

Woodcote, founded by blessed Cardinal John Henry Newman, on Fridays for lunch and dinner serves “pasta, risotto and fish – all with a salad,” Director Clive Dytor wrote in an e-mail. In the morning, in the dormitory, “no full English breakfast”. The Director also wrote that there had not been any critical comments, in spite of the fact that fifty per cent of the pupils are non-Catholics. “I think that the majority accepted these changes – similarly to the ban on smoking in public places – as a sound progress”.

Clare Ward remembers also one positive response from non-Catholics. The Bishops’ Conference received a letter of praise from an association of fishmongers!

Meat does not fly in Cameroon

English and Welsh Catholics live in a multi-denominational and multi-cultural country. They are ethnically heterogeneous themselves in the first place. Next to native English Catholics, some of whom have Reformation martyrs among their predecessors, there are many Irishmen. Poles make a strong group as well, which has grown in number in the last decade. At Mass, you can also meet many Filipinos and Africans. African priests come sometimes to the rescue of the parishes that do not have a parish priest.

This situation is witnessed in St. Joseph’s Parish in Tilehurst, a district of Reading (half an hour from London by train). Fr Bonaventura Ndong Che, known as Father Bon, arrived from Cameroon at the time when the new fasting rules were being introduced. He tells with satisfaction how vibrant and young the Church in Cameroon is and how many young people enter seminaries and monasteries. “Catholicism is very traditional in the English part of Cameroon. We are very serious about what the Catechism and bishops say,” he stresses. They are serious about the Friday fast as well. In Cameroon, you are obliged to abstain from meat; however, ‘flying animals’ do not count as meat there. Generally, meat is a luxury. In large

cities, vegetables are a luxury because poor residents have no way to keep them, transport is expensive, and roads are poor.

Hence, in cities it would be a penance to deny oneself vegetables, if one is offered them. “We also have many Catholic boarding schools. Teachers ask their pupils to deny themselves one dish. When a year is over, they add up how much they have saved and pay this amount to the needy,” Fr Bon answers. On the sense of fasting, he speaks in the style of African preachers: in a simple and emphatic way. “The world lives on consumption today. We are supposed to swim against the tide. Fasting helps us grow in sainthood. In past centuries it was limited only to the Easter triduum. As one cannot sanctify oneself in three days a year, the fast was expanded to include forty days before Easter. But this is not enough, either, so every Friday is the time of fasting and penance,” explains the priest. His English parish accepted the change without a problem. “This was probably so, because these are the Catholics who observe traditions. But I can imagine more liberal parishes where critical opinions could be voiced,” he adds. Father Bon does his own cooking and says he is not good at it. On a Friday, he would eat a sandwich and cook some rice.

Anglicans stay silent on fasting

The Rev. David Archer used to have a hunger lunch when he studied theology. Today he heads St. Mary’s Anglican Parish in Purley-on-Thames, a village close to Reading. He is married; his three children attend primary school. The hunger lunch was very modest and simple, it would consist of only bread and a beverage. Students would have it in order to identify with the poor. This is practically the only penitential practice David Archer encountered in the Church of England. He considers himself a member of the Evangelical, charismatic branch of Anglicanism, next to liberal and Anglo-Catholic, the most traditional, branches. “The practice of fasting

is very limited in Anglicanism. I have almost never heard a sermon about it. I was brought up in the Church of England but I have spent some time in a certain independent Christian church. There, fasting was talked about and practised. I know a man who denied himself food for 40 days, like Christ," he remembers.

He is fascinated with the Catholic Church's return to traditional penitential practices. He learned about this when I asked him for an interview. He asks about the significance of Friday for Catholics and ponders about biblical sources of fasting. "The Old Testament gives many examples of fasting. Jesus Himself fasted and expected His disciples to do the same. However, from a theological point of view, I cannot explain the sense of fasting. The only explanation I can offer is that fasting gives spiritual strength and that fasting helps 'tune in to' God better," David Archer says.

To my question about the penitential or expiatory sense of fasting, he replies: "This sounds Catholic to me. Anglo-Catholics would like it. However, from the evangelical perspective, I feel uncomfortable to have to agree with such thinking. Christ's death on the cross suffices. We do not need to flog ourselves or think badly about ourselves. Our sins are forgiven. We have a new life," he confesses.

David Archer agrees that denying oneself food or pleasure to help others has a lot of sense. "Stress should not fall on abstinence and self-denial but on doing something good – charitable works and good deeds," he observes.

Fast in an envelope

Englishmen are steeped in the spirit of charity. Accounts of charity events receive lots of coverage in the local press. Permanent fixtures of towns are charity shops with second-hand clothes, books, or toys. Sandra Brewester from Woolhamp-ton, Portsmouth Diocese, fifteen years ago got an idea how to

combine the English spirit of charity with the Catholic penitential Friday spirit. She founded a Friday Self-Denial Group. The rule is simple: anybody who wishes to join the group goes to a coordinator and takes an envelope. On a Friday, he or she denies him- or herself chips, a bottle of wine or a cake. The money he or she thus saves is put into the envelope and offered during collection during Sunday Mass. "It's not just another charity drive. By giving up something pleasant, we can identify with those who suffer more than we do," Sandra observes. Every week, in the four churches of the parish, about 80 envelopes are collected. Last year almost £4,000 were raised. The funds collected by the group go most often to small charities. In the beginning the group helped the wards of the parishioner who is a doctor working in Malawi. At another occasion, parishioners bought a cow for an African family. This year, they are supporting infant feeding posts in Khartoum, Sudan. Sandra says that this is about concrete things; this appeals better to human sensitivity than dropping money down the well of large charitable organizations.

Sandra is very happy with the new rules of Friday penance and fasting, although little has changed in her life and the group's principles of operation. Except for the fact that the parish priest, Dermot Tredget, a Benedictine, gave her publicity. "When he spoke during Sunday Mass about the bishops' decision on fasting, he suggested that a very good reply would be to join the Friday Self-Denial Group," Sandra rejoices.

The revisiting of ancient fasting traditions is not the only sign of revival in the Church in Britain. Another huge project is under way – a new translation of the Missal, closer to the Latin original. This however deserves a separate text. Opinions are also being voiced that the obligatory feasts of the Epiphany and the Ascension should be reinstated (now they are moved to

the closest Sunday). Are English and Welsh Catholics making their lives harder for themselves or are they desperately trying to prove their spiritual superiority over others? Or, perhaps, they are taking off the straitjacket of political correctness and passiveness hidden under the mask of tolerance, and right now are taking a deep breath of God's free children? |

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*On the way
to the Altar*

And I would like Ennio Morricone

It is said that the wedding is for the bride and groom, while the reception is for the family. There is something in this. The organisation though, of a wedding party is also a lesson in family dialogue, compromise and being able to negotiate.

Katarzyna Kolska speaks to **MACIEJ SOSZYŃSKI O.P.**

It is highly probable that the wedding couple will first book a place for the wedding before they come to book a Nuptial Mass at the church. Does this sequence mean anything in particular, or is it simply a sign of the times?

There's nothing wrong in first thinking about a place first for statistically, this is more difficult than finding a church. Moreover, the care taken with the wedding celebration afterwards also reflects the special meaning of this event – that we wish to give it a unique, celebratory character. If we look at the history of various civilisations and societies, we can see that the moment of completing wedding vows was always very important and that the moment when a man and woman are joined in life is given the most special of ranks. At the same time we need to be careful, for a special rank is not the same as a religious one.

On the one hand we can really admire the loving care given in making sure every detail is right and that everything is beautiful, elegant, different, and unique but at times there is the impression that this loving care is greater when it comes to appearances, rather than a spiritual preparation for the acceptance of this sacrament.

I wouldn't be so strict and wouldn't condemn everything outright that shines and glitters, on the condition that it is an attempt to shout to all the world that something very important is about to happen in our life. The sacrament of marriage is a deep religious experience, linked to an enormous joy - that now together we shall embark on a new life. The problem occurs when the so called decorations are of the highest level but the awareness of the sacrament is at the level of a kindergarten, or is not at all present. Then just the form remains, without any contents. That is why we need to find a middle way.

I know couples that say the wedding party is not important. And when I hear such declarations I have to admit that I am somewhat distrustful. If minimalism is a result of someone wishing to experience this uniquely important moment - that's fine. Sometimes though it is a form of snobbism - the four of us will do a wedding out of the public eye, but everyone shall find out about it.

Maybe the betrothed need to be made aware that when they say their marriage vows, not only does their life change but so too that of their kith and kin, who have a right to experience this celebratory occasion together.

It is said that the wedding is for the bride and groom, the celebration for the family. And there is something to this. The organisation though of the wedding party is also a lesson in dialogue, compromise and being able to communicate. Maybe in this particular family there were never events up to now that had to set such forces into motion. Maybe this family

did not meet at all. And suddenly there's a need to organise an event, collect everyone...

Some of whom we have never seen before....

And some of whom we harbour various emotions, various feelings. Sometimes the wedding and the celebration afterwards open a wound, for example it might be necessary to piece together the parents' broken marriage of the bride or groom.

I am not an expert at organising wedding parties but it seems that it's a task for two sides. And it really is not worth making a fuss about the fine detail. Maybe in some cases the father of the bride was never present in the real sense and didn't have much to say but now thinks that since it's the wedding of my daughter, then I shall make sure I have my own way.

He knows that he hasn't been the best of fathers but at his daughter's wedding he will be the best organiser, will do everything to the best. Naturally, this can really make his daughter angry – who has a right to ask *Where have you been all these years*, though I do not think it is the best moment to point out the lack of parenting. The wedding party is also an enormous lesson for parents – so that they learn to respect their children's wishes.

So let them invite guests not only from the family circle but also friends, those important to them – with whom they will have a good time. The best wedding parties are those where people know each other and are happy for the newlyweds and the joy that embraces them.

Does Father also speak about alcohol with the betrothed preparing for the wedding?

No, I don't demonise alcohol as an issue – maybe because at weddings where I took part I never saw anyone drunk senseless. Though I know that in various places these receptions can vary enormously. In my opinion the less joy there is in

a person, the more external stimulants there need to be for this joy to occur.

And it's obvious – the less a person knows the workings of their heart, the more they will be concerned with what's on the outside. On the other hand, if a person experiences their marriage sacrament deeply as the joy of becoming one with their partner of life and entry to a new road, then the wedding reception will be a reflection of this.

Let's return for a moment from the nuptial rite to the church. The wedding couple wish not only to influence how the reception is going to be, where it's going to be, as well as how the benches will be decorated, what flowers are to be on the altar but also the procedures around the altar. What in this respect is worth arranging with the priest before the Nuptial Mass.

In preparing the liturgy of the wedding sacrament I meet with the betrothed so as to discuss various technical issues – but not only. We start from the most important, the liturgy of the sacrament. I show them what they can and should have a say in, and mark out specific tasks. For example I ask: What is your entrance into the church going to look like? For every entry symbolises something. The father can lead the bride. Usually though, the wedding couple wish that they be escorted in.

Liturgically this has a very deep significance because just as in the sacrament of christening, you stand at the doorway to the temple and wait for the priest who shall lead the child to the church, so too the nuptial pair stand at the dawn of the sacrament. They follow the priest not to model her wedding dress and his nuptial tails but rather, to show those gathered in the church – *look, this is our day, this liturgy is our liturgy and we welcome all present to take part in it with us.*

I also emphasise that they choose a text to read – for this is their liturgy of the word. In a moment after all, I'll turn

to them and say *You have listened to God's Word, reminded yourself of the meaning of human love. Thus I ask you, what be your decision?* If they are to remind themselves of something, listen to something – they ought to prepare accordingly. I only stress that it be a reading from the Bible, because in the past someone wished to change it for a nice text of love. And this only means that this person does not understand what happens during this Mass. I am against all forms of whims when it comes to liturgy.

And for Father what is a sign of such whims?

For example the substitution of a psalm with some work of music. A psalm is not a flourish but an answer to the Word that is heard and it is a problem when the reply to the story of the creation of men and women in the Book of Genesis be for example, a fragment out of *The Mission* by Ennio Morricone.

What fragments of the Holy Scripture do wedding couples most often choose?

Usually this is *Hymn to Love* from chapter 13, St. Paul's first letter to Corinthians. Sometimes they say *won't it be a bit silly – everyone has it at their wedding?* So What? For every couple this letter has another resonance. So we can use this Letter to Corinthians? You can! People won't be bored? They won't be bored.

The liturgy of the word is an occasion to include those closest during the reading. Here, I'm absolutely firm – you need to find people, I won't be reading. These can be your family, friends or witnesses.

I always ask always that the couple prepare a prayer of the faithful – for it is not to be from the list but especially for them and their closest ones. I say to them – give thought to your parents and who was important on your path to the altar. And find someone who shall read that challenging task.

Are there any other elements of the Mass that the bride and groom could have a say in, suggest to the priest or ones that the priest could propose so that the liturgy be different, more celebratory?

Different is not a good description. It's important that it engages everyone and helps in making our religious life an active one. Among others, the wedding oath comes to mind, which should be learnt off by heart – not so much as to recite it on the wedding day but to become one with it, so in the future it be a constant companion in daily prayer and at the same time a ledger of conscience for love, faithfulness and honesty in marriage.

It is also worth caring about an appropriate musical backing, one without flights of fancy or whims. It ought not to be a concert but a small church choir that shall lead the singing.

Not everyone though knows such musicians – won't an organist be enough?

Of course – as long as he plays work that is meant for the occasion. I am not a policeman in these matters and tolerate a great deal, but you can't focus only on the work being lovely – foremost it ought to be liturgical. Does Mendelssohn's March have to open proceedings? Most would say yes, it has to. I would say, not at all. Other works of music can be proposed.

Mendelssohn is tied to a certain tradition and let's not pretend that traditions in our life are very important.

Agreed – worst still if the wedding becomes a tradition and we wed out of tradition.

And arrange a church wedding because that's what mum, granny want, for that's the right thing to do....?

At times alas, yes. There is also another reason – a deeper one. The need for sacralisation of the relationship. Sacralisation though is not equal to the sacrament, for it reaches to a higher force. A civil marriage conducted in the presence of an official

is an expression of this sacralisation, but it does not carry the spirit or beauty of a church wedding.

Noone sets out for the Civil Records Office in a white wedding dress and long veil, whereas the church is an ideal place for this.

That is why a few years ago I came up with the idea that perhaps it would be worthwhile to have in every town a building reminiscent of a Baroque church, with high steps and official in period dress. I wouldn't wish to offend anyone, but for some people that would be more than sufficient.

Is Father not somewhat trivialising the matter?

If for some the most important are stairs, carpets and decorations and if the wedding day marks a confession for the first and second time – well there is something amiss.

I would like to leave the matter of a confession to another time – now I'd like to raise the issue of money. Some say they cannot have a wedding for they don't have the money.

In those situations I always ask what it is they don't have money for – I can always give them a blessing for free. This is not an issue. Often in this situation they say they don't have enough for the wedding party.

There are tall stories about how much you need to pay for a wedding in church.

Tall stories circulate because noone speaks of this. A bit like the proverbial skeleton in the cupboard. Everyone knows it's there, but noone looks inside. It's no skeleton though – but a small mouse. And as far as money is concerned, you need to ask yourself the question how much the Church expects or indeed demands. Let's start by saying that the marriage sacrament is conducted during the Holy Mass, by the priest. According to the regulations of canonical law we know that

an intention can be added to the Holy Mass, in which this mass is conducted. The Wedding Mass is thus conducted according to the intention of the nuptial couple.

The priest pays for his living from the intentions and donations that the faithful leave. If we look in the regulations of canonical law, we see that the tray passed around during various types of mass does not go towards the upkeep of the priest – but for the upkeep of the parish. And the priest does not have access to these funds. This is a so called minimum that is worth knowing, when we think about the matter of money in the church.

Often people do not realise this.

Exactly, and do not stop and think that the church needs heating and lighting, that it is necessary to pay the organist, the verger, someone to clean the church, to buy the Host, wine for the mass and flowers. Thinking along the lines that God provides everything for free in is a mistake. Of course someone could count all this up and say wait a minute, this is not such a fortune! That's true.

In that case how much should the wedding couple give for the nuptial mass?

I know a priest in Wrocław who, when the betrothed ask how much they should donate for the wedding, says – enough that you feel it and that I feel it. In my opinion this is a very good measure. If the wedding couple are prepared to spend money on so many various details in relation to the wedding and the reception after, why then does the matter of a donation become such a hot potato?

Why doesn't anyone protest that it costs so much to decorate the church or hire a wedding limousine? It's a totally different situation when the couple come to the priest and honestly say they can't afford to make a donation. Or when someone says to the priest they are able only to donate so much. In such situations the priest has an obligation to give his blessings to such a wedding.

The entire so called industry around weddings is developing at an unheard of rate. And recently evenings for the bride-to-be and groom-to-be organised in various clubs are popular. It is no longer just a pleasant get together in the company of friends....

We can say the kind of person the bride or groom is will determine the kind of 'pre-nuptial' evening. And although such evenings are a tradition, something strange has begun to occur. The moment of farewelling a person's single status has become one of trauma. We 'lament' this passing of 'freedom' as if it was the end of everything. Then the question arises – *If I am lamenting this passing of freedom and independence to such an extent, then maybe I am not yet ready to enter into a marriage – and all that it demands?*

For it ought to be the other way around: *I am joyful that at last I shall no longer be single and in the end I shall be able to be in a dialogue and union with the person I love – that finally I shall go to bed with my partner joyfully and we shall experience being one.* This is cause for joy – not for lament and drowning it in alcohol.

But maybe they are not joyful because of this, for they have already become one long before the wedding?

In that case the couple need to find another solution.

At such evenings the future husband or wife often chooses another partner to engage in sex.

This is something abominable – something that drags human dignity and the relationship into the gutter.

But the friends of such couples, when organising these evenings, are convinced that this is a splendid and original idea.

That is why during preparatory meetings for the marriage sacrament I underscore that each of the betrothed has a right to say they do not wish to take part in such carousing. *Thank you for such a present, one we don't know what to do with.* Really

there is nothing wrong in leaving and saying *No thank you*. Let the atmosphere be dampened, some bad feelings hang in the air – maybe we won't drink that vodka but we shall retain something more, we shall retain our wholeness, sensitivity and shall not indulge in excess – because this is an excess.

Since we're on the topic, I'd like to speak more on a matter that I come across sometimes – mutual consent. This is something completely incomprehensible to me – that a wife-to-be agrees that her future husband take part in sexual excesses. At this point I ask what relation a couple have to each other, to the sexuality of their relationship. In a normal situation this is beyond the pale that a husband or wife go to an 'agency' or some special club. This is an abuse of marriage bonds.

Maybe this is a result of the fact that we forget the purpose of such a 'farewell' evening for each of the betrothed – that it's not an evening of tears and lament but one heralding a new life. Thus dear friends I won't have as much time for you as before to meet up and have that drink or tea or coffee – from now on my husband and family comes first. Tonight I shall be saying my farewells.

I say my goodbyes and I want to tell you that that from now on we shall have to learn anew our relationship.

We haven't said anything yet about thanking the parents.

This is a beautiful and very important moment, one worth thinking over and preparing. Usually the couple wish to thank their parents during the wedding party – and of course we can keep to this custom. It came to my mind some time ago that this expression of thanks take place in church, for example before the blessing of the wedding couple. A bouquet of flowers – without purple prose. It's enough to go up, present the flowers and give them a hug.

Some couples take this idea up and for the parents it's an event they'll remember till the end of their days – for they

were recognised, invited to the Mass, to share the joy of their children. I like to remind that the marriage sacrament is of course foremost a sacrament for the nuptial couple, but also in a certain sense, for their parents. For the parents, through this sacrament of marriage, have to draw upon new reserves of strength to experience the relationship with their children.

Where does Father have such ideas from? Maybe it's a way so as not to become bored during the celebration of another marriage sacrament. Does Father not have a sense of weariness?

I'm surprised myself. I've been doing this for 11 years – every couple is different and brings another history, family and friends. Some I know very well, who are my friends, while others I meet only during such occasions. All are always very overcome with emotion, as well as preparations and the liturgy itself. On my part, I try as best I can to treat them as individuals and very personally. This always brings a good result.

Does Father have some special advice for the betrothed?

Hmm – a difficult question. I do. I would like to encourage all concerned who think about preparing for the wedding and reception not to focus on it being original and unique – for achieving this in our times is very difficult. I would urge though that the couple first think about themselves, what is closest to their hearts, the expression of this. Then they can be certain that everyone shall have a good time and most importantly, they themselves. |

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Church Controversies

Christian Jihad?

Crusades were launched not because Muslims led normal peaceful lives while translating Aristotle's works, but because The Holy Tomb was destroyed and Byzantine towns were attacked by the Turks.

Dominik Jarczewski O.P. speaks to **TOMASZ GAŁUSZKA O.P.**

Where did the idea of the Crusades come from?

There is no simple answer to that question. Firstly, it was not the idea of one person. Secondly, it is hard to identify when everything started. The Crusade movement is a concurrence of events in the Church and society, in and out of Europe. But we can say for sure that this movement could not have started before 11th century.

Why not before the 11th century?

This was the special century for many reasons. In Poland the first generation of Christians was growing, we had bishop Stanislaus [martyr saint] and, thanks to king Bolesław Szczodry and prince Władysław Herman, a large number of churches was built. In Western Europe we have above all the Gregorian Reforms, which thoroughly remodelled the Church in a way how it worked and how it was understood. From the times of Gregory VII, papal power was strengthened and roles of clergy

and laymen were clearly divided . Also, the significance of spiritual and intellectual development was emphasized thanks to monastic communities. Those changes were necessary so that 120 thousand people could have set off to the Holy Land. Europe of the first millennium had still been forming after the Migration Period and the Roman Empire's fall. It was a conglomerate of small communities. Such scattered countries were almost impossible to govern. First of all they had to be united.

That sounds interesting, because there is an opinion that the Crusades were invented by pope Urban II in order to solve conflicts in Europe. After all, nothing has such unifying power as a common enemy.

It is worth seeing it from a wider perspective of the papacy. Its goal was to educate society in a moral sense . This is the fruit of Gregorian Reforms. When the Church became defined as an institution, the popes of the 11th century started to educate society, which was dominated by violence. After all, it was not surprising, as all nations descended from barbaric tribes. The popes quickly understood that violence could not be totally eradicated. It had to be somehow curbed. That was why in the 12th century at the First Lateran Council so called "truce of God" (treuga Dei) was introduced. This kind of truce answered a question which was fundamental for chivalry: in what circumstances one can defend one's interests legally by using millitary force? So according to treuga Dei it was forbidden to pursue any fight from Wednesday evening to Monday morning and during Advent & Lent. As we can guess, it was practically impossible for a Christian knight to take part in a war, because a millitary conflict cannot be waged for three days a week.

That must have really limited room for manoeuvre.

The Crusade movement was a similar idea. The pope noticed that people were violent and crude, but on the other hand they were religious. So perhaps it was worthwhile to use their

desire to fight for a good reason? The theory of penitential war helped the pope here.

Penitential war? That sounds like contradiction, doesn't it?

It was a novelty. In the Church tradition there were three works of mercy: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. In the 11th century another one was added: penitential war.

Killing was treated as a work of mercy?

Not killing itself, but sacrificing one's energy and talents for a good cause. The 11th century was all about fighting for freedom. The Church fought for independence from secular powers, dukes fought for independence of their territories. But the inhabitants of Byzantium were losing their freedom under the power of the Seljuq dynasty's subjects (mostly Turks), who conquered most of Anatolia. In that context, in the court of Matilda of Tuscany, a concept of penitential war was created by a think tank of the time. Penitential war was invented as a way of repentance for its participants' sins. Not every war could be a penitential one. The pope had the power to discern, in what circumstances the faithful were entitled to indulgence. For instance, John of Mantua explained the pope's power over military matters with Jesus's words: *Jesus did not tell Peter to throw out his sword, but to put it back to the sheath*. So this was therefore the basis on which Peter and his successors claimed this specific power.

Unfortunately that opened a gate to manipulation. Thanks to the papal promise of indulgence, no European sovereign could have had such an army at his disposal as the pope had. For example Innocent II extended indulgence on all who fought against enemies of the papacy.

By saying this, you are trying to judge the pope's intentions. Each kind of power can be abused. By the way, a question arises how to define the Crusades and how many were launched.

According to a traditional concept, a crusade is a war expedition called by pope and aimed at the Holy Land only. But according to a newer, pluralistic definition, crusades are all kinds of war expeditions organized as a response to the pope's call for the purpose of defence of faith or the Church. Therefore, there were not seven or eight crusades, but a few tens, and one of the last ones was the Battle of Vienna.

At the time of crusades the Holy Land had been ruled by Muslims for four centuries and nobody was particularly uncomfortable with that. What changed in the 11th century? Was it really necessary to intervene then?

It is wrong to say that nobody was interested what was happening in The Holy Land. Everybody knew and was affected by the fact that Jerusalem was conquered by Muslims in 638. It was not possible though to gather an adequate army during the first millennium. Military forces were not organized well enough and papacy was too weak. The moment when Christians found out that they should have done something was the year 1009, when khalif Hakim, not without a good reason called 'Mad', ordered the destruction of the Holy Tomb. It was a shock for Christians. From 1071 Seljuq Turcs attacked Byzantine towns and they started to threaten Constantinople. The ambassadors of the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos travelled to see the pope and ask him for help. The pope found out that he was at the centre of events; the Western elite was under his influence and the Eastern emperor wanted his help. It was nearly like the Second Coming: one flock and one shepherd. This political and ideo-theological coincidence led pope Urban II to the point, when on the 27th of November 1095 at the synod of Clermont he called chivalry for the first crusade.

What was the purpose of the first crusade?

Above all, converting Muslims into christianity was not its purpose, for the First Crusade was not an action of evangelization.

Neither was it aimed at conquering the new land. Its purpose was to free and defend sacred places.

How many people answered the call?

Estimates given by historians are as high as 120 thousand potential crusaders, but not more than a half of that number actually took part in it. Only about 10 per cent of crusaders were soldiers. The rest were squires, servants, in many cases also the soldiers' wives. Apart from them, there were a lot of poor people who were of no military use and just caused a lot of trouble. So together with the First Crusade, the so called People's Crusade started and it totally slipped out of the Church's control. Knights were getting organized for the expedition, but unexpectedly many simple people wanted to take part in this mission. Then Peter the Hermit appeared on the scene and lead the crowds. He said that before the Holy Land would be freed from strangers, first the crusader's towns should be clear from them. The only strangers at that time were Jews. That was how the disgraceful part of crusades history began - first Jewish pogroms in Trier, Regensburg and Cologne in 1096.

The crusade must have been a great logistics challenge. The army had to march thousands of miles before they reached Palestine. Their journey lasted for months and they had to pass through countries that were not necessarily friendly. How could they provide such an army with the supplies they needed, for instance food and money?

- These were important issues, because they questioned a materialistic interpretation of the Crusades, which has been in effect until recently. According to the materialistic interpretation, crusaders were poor knights who did not own any land, so they hoped to become rich. Nothing could be further from the truth. If anyone decided to go on a crusade, they and their family had to pay an enormous price for armour, equipment, squires, food and other essentials needed for many months of

travel and fight. The First Crusade was a test for many people. It showed how unprepared they were for their long journey and how inappropriate their armour was for the warm southern climate. On the other hand, it was the only successful expedition: they conquered Jerusalem and founded The Kingdom of Jerusalem. It was a romantic uprising of great enthusiasts, who put all their eggs in one basket and they won. Perhaps naiveness coupled with enthusiasm was their key to success. In later years, crusaders knew what to expect and that was sometimes their stumbling block. The Fourth Crusade is a good example here. Having been aware of the costs, knights got involved in various kinds of business and discussions, that eventually led them not to the Holy Land but to Constantinople. As a result, the crusaders looted the city.

The infamous capture of Constantinople... How did it happen?

If I was asked to tell which was the most significant crusade, also regarding current debates about the East, my answer would be: of course, Fourth one that took place between 1202 and 1204. The Orthodox Church still remembers it. What happened then? It was a tragic coincidence. It is often said that crusaders were meant to go to the Holy Land, but they disobeyed the pope and went to Constantinople which they very brutally vandalized and looted. But this is an oversimplified explanation.

According to the original plan, the crusaders were to sail to Egypt, courtesy of Venetian merchants, so they could attack Palestine from the south. The amount of money they were obliged to pay the merchants was precisely specified. Unfortunately, for various reasons, there were fewer knights than expected, so they were not able to pay the fixed price. It is also possible that the price was raised. Then the Venetian Doge Enrico Dandolo decided to use crusaders to collect his debts in Zara, a town in today's Croatia (Zadar). He promised the crusaders he would lower the price. Unfortunately the army went too far and looted Zara. The crusade came to a deadlock.

The pope excommunicated the crusaders, but nobody wanted to announce that to them. It was still not possible to sail to Egypt. Then an unexpected proposal came. The future Byzantine emperor Alexios IV asked crusaders to help him resolve a conflict within his country. As a result of a riot, his father Isaac II Angelos was imprisoned. Alexios promised the crusaders that if they helped him regain the throne, he would help them financially and militarily, so that they would be able to reach the Holy Land using the usual way from the north. The Crusaders agreed to help Alexios, and at the beginning of July 1203 they arrived near Constantinople. The mere fact that the crusaders were there made it easy for Alexios to regain the throne. But the new emperor was unable to fulfill his promise; while he had the army of crusaders waiting by the city walls. Meanwhile another coup was staged and the future emperor Alexios V promised his partisans that he would expel the present emperor and defeat the army of Western spongers freeloaders. The crusaders, having been waiting for a year by the city walls, felt deceived. They understood they would get nothing and be attacked in a while. What shall they do then? Wait for the attack or demand their payoff? Unfortunately, they chose the latter: in July they assaulted the city and poured out all their frustration. In order to understand their aggression and cruelty, we have to remember the Roman-Catholic minority that was massacred in Constantinople in 1182. Memories were still fresh. All those factors came together and the results of the Fourth Crusade were tragic. As we can see, history is much more nuanced than we think. But having said that, I do not want to make any excuses for violence. Death of a human being is always a wrong thing.

The cruelty of the first crusaders-conquerers of Jerusalem is often presented in opposition to the clemency of sultan Saladin who let Christians leave the city in peace a few decades later.

This is a myth that was spreaded through literature. It was created by Walter Scott, a protestant, who was a fine writer but poor historian. He wrote a novel 'Talisman' about the Third Crusade. He created three types of characters which were blindly copied by his successors. So a Catholic was a violent and fanatic knight, a member of the Orthodox Church was a victim of the conflict between two empires, and a Muslim was an intellectualist, nearly like a gentleman of the 19th century. An influential historian, Steven Runciman, followed Walter Scott's ideas and the rest was done by popular culture, for instance the film 'Kingdom of Heaven'. Unfortunately, our common knowledge is mostly based on dogmatized literary and historical fiction, not on serious academic publications. These show very clearly that a simple opposition of 'goodies' versus 'baddies' is a huge misunderstanding. At present we already know that the conquest of Jerusalem was not as brutal as it was presented by chroniclers. However, we have to remember that prisoners-of-war were not spared after the deciding battle of Hittin, when Saladin was close the victory, which finally lead to the conquest of Jerusalem. Saladin ordered the beheading of all crusaders. But the crusaders did not kill their prisoners.

But Saladin spared the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

It was a part of the war rules used at that time. If any army approached the walls of a town, the governors had to take into account that their town may be destroyed. It was a matter of discernment if it was possible and affordable to defend the town. They could give a ransom for themselves and in that case war prisoners were not killed. But they could choose to do nothing. When the conquest started, soldiers could not be stopped in a frenzy of a battle, they were too excited. Everbody realised that. The conquest of Jerusalem by crusaders was a completely different situation in comparison with the the later conquest by Muslims. First time there were no negotiations,

but the second time both parties made an agreement. So each conquest ended in a different way.

There is an opinion, according to which some Muslims' hatred towards the the Western world is a result of the trauma caused by the Crusades.

There is no evidence justifying that opinion. Let us remember that the Crusades were launched not because Muslims led normal peaceful lives while translating Aristotle's works, but because The Holy Tomb was destroyed and Byzantine towns were attacked by the Seljuq Turks. Seljuqs belonged to the most radical group among Sunni Muslims. Today's founders of Islamic State are their successors. It was, and it still is, a very brutal branch of Islam. When the First Crusade was launched, Muslims had been aggressive for 100 years already. It would be a mistake to say: let us not react, let us just observe them, send letters, express our concern. Crusades were caused by aggression of Islam. That is a sufficient explanation why the today's jihad cannot be looked at as a response to crusades.

Can we call crusades a kind of Christian jihad?

Such a comparison is not adequate, because primarily jihad is a war within Islam itself. The purpose of jihad is to strengthen and unite Islam, therefore Muslims fight Muslims in that war, for instance, Shia against Sunnis, radical Sunnis against moderate Sunnis, etc. Fighting against the faithful of other religions is a secondary matter. But as I mentioned before, the Crusades were not 'a missionary action', but a response to the aggressive policy of Muslim authorities.

How about the so called Crusade against heretic Cathars? Can it also be treated as a fight for the purity of religion...?

That was indeed an inner Church fight, but it was not as if Cathars just led a peaceful life. It was a response to violence. The reason for the Crusade against the Cathars was the murder

of the papal legate Pierre de Castelleau. And there are many more examples of violence of this kind.

Now, what about jihadists? What kind of violence are they responding to? To the violence of religious minorities in Iraq and Egypt, which are in fact vulnerable and defenceless? So this kind of analogy is far from perfect. The only common aspect of the Crusades and jihad is religion on banners. But the Crusades were reaction to aggression. Jihad is war against the unfaithful, that starts without any preceding attack.

Let us try to sum up two centuries of Crusades. You have mentioned that only during the First Crusade Jerusalem was conquered. So did the Crusaders fulfil their purpose?

Any answer to that question would raise a huge debate. We could list positives and negatives. As for positives, army and military science such as defence and strategy had developed enormously. We should also mention cultural development. The Kingdom of Jerusalem lasted for 200 years, so people were born and died there, and they absorbed Muslim culture and art. It was noticeable in material culture: from weaver's craft to flavours and tastes. Although Muslims and Christians fought with each other, thereafter, above all else, they cooperated and were learning how to live side by side. Even when the Kingdom of Jerusalem had fallen in 1291, Christians got on quite well in the Middle East. Another positive is strengthening of the papacy.

But obviously, there were also negatives. From the today's point of view, the most important negatives concern the Fourth Crusade. It aroused such strong enmity between the Eastern and Western Church, that even today we cannot overcome it. The Fourth Crusade made Byzantium so weak that, during the following centuries, Muslims could approach the outskirts of Vienna. Antisemitism and pogroms must also be included in negatives.

Any attempt of judgement on the results of crusades will be a matter of discussion. But a historian has to understand

human motivations. People did not join the Crusades in order to kill, conquer and become rich. They did it because they believed, and they were taught to lay down their lives for faith. They were taught that they must not be indifferent. Therefore, I very much like what our master Humbert of Romans said when asked if it was good that the best knights were killed far away in the East: 'The aim of Christianity is not to populate the earth, but to populate heaven. (...) By this kind of death people make their way to heaven who perhaps would never reach it by another road.' Here we enter the domain of those people's faith. And perhaps that is why we will never really understand the Crusades. |

Translation: **Jolanta Brózda-Wiśniewska, Daniel Wiśniewski**

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BVRGHI

PON

You cannot be born here

Luca Giani is the son of the chief of the Vatican gendarmerie. He is responsible for the Pope's safety 24/7. How is it to live and grow in the Vatican City, to meet the Pope while walking in the garden, to talk with him about the future?

Jolanta Brózda-Wiśniewska speaks to **LUCA GIANI**

How many lay people live in Vatican and where exactly (are there special homes, flats, estates)? Or there are some who live in the city of Rome?

In the Vatican, I believe that there are about 600 citizens and another 200 residents. The majority of these people are priests serving for the Vatican Diplomatic Service, Swiss Guards, many Cardinals, Bishops and other religious people. The Swiss Guards are about 110, many of whom – those with high ranks – live inside the Vatican City with their families

How would you describe the place where you lived?

Vatican is about 110 acres, about 0,44 square kilometres. It is built on a hill. The picture would do it more justice than my words, but it is a magical place. There are a lot of buildings when you enter the Vatican, but the more you get in towards the hills, the more you get to the Vatican gardens. The gardens are rather small, but they contain about 250 fountains.

I live in an apartment at the boarder with Italy, close to Porta Sant'Anna (Saint Anne's entrance to the Vatican), which derives its name from the Sant'Anna church located close to the entrance gate. A peculiarity of the Vatican is that nobody owns apartments or houses, since all the buildings belong to the State

Even furniture in your apartment?

Some furniture we bought but some is tied to the apartment. Some of the buildings are very old and have historical furniture.

Did you go to school in Rome?

Yes. In the Vatican there is a seminary, reserved for young people of ages between 11 and 17, who study in a school belonging to the Diocese of Rome in an extraterritorial area not far from the Vatican. I went to a public school in Italy, and every morning I used to go there on my bicycle.

What were your classmates' reaction to the fact that you lived in Vatican?

The fact that I lived in the Vatican has created a peculiar and particular situation; in fact, I was born and lived until I was 10 in Tuscany, then together with my mom and sister, I moved to the Vatican to follow my dad for a couple years before moving abroad to study. Thus, I usually introduce myself as an Italian citizen. Certainly, having lived in the Vatican for several years has been a great and different experience both in terms of my academic education and in shaping my behavior and attitude since I lived in a very special place.

How about your friends? Could they come to your place for sleepover for example?

The Vatican city has very strict rules. You have to notify in advance the presence of external people. There is no problem for them to come, but the relevant authorities have to be notified.

Were you permitted to go to the private gardens of Holy Father?

Yes, within boundaries. When the Holy Father is there to relax and walk around, usually people are not allowed. However, when the Holy Father was not there I could go. For example, I will always remember one day when I was riding my bicycle in the gardens. I was ten then. I saw my father running towards me and telling me to hide behind the tree. I asked why, but he had no time to answer. Therefore, I obeyed him, I hid my bike, and hid myself behind the bush. As I was hiding, to my great surprise a few minutes later I saw the Holy Father John Paul II and his private Secretary, now His Eminency Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz. My heart was beating fast. You know, I had met the pope a few times, but in official circumstances. This time I was wearing sweatpants and a T-shirt and he was a few meters away from me. They passed by and then I could not help it, so I glanced out of the bush. Right then, I do not know why, His Excellency Dziwisz (he was still a bishop back then) turned around and saw me. The Pope continued walking, and Monsignor Dziwisz said: 'Luca, come say hello to the Holy Father'. I said that I couldn't, as I had been instructed not to move'. H.E. Dziwisz said: 'You can come Luca, it is ok'. But I kept hiding. When my father went back home that night, he was very upset. He said, 'Luca, why didn't you go? You know who that person was? It was the Secretary of the Pope, Monsignor Dziwisz'. I said: 'But Dad! You told me not to go under any circumstance'... Learning when to disobey my father was the first of many diplomatic lessons that the Vatican taught me.

You would make a good soldier, you know how to follow the orders.

You know, growing up in a place like the Vatican means dealing with a lot of important people such as Monsignors and Bishops. The Vatican teaches you how to be proper, respectful, mindful of the others, especially of the poor people or people who

might think in a different way than you. The Vatican is visited by tourists from all over the world, and I was blessed to see people from all over the world at receptions or events or just walking around the streets that surround the Vatican.

Do you remember any other important meetings with the popes or other important persons?

It was the unveiling of the beautiful Statue of Saint Michael the Archangel in the Vatican Gardens. There were very few people and I was blessed to be there, on the back. It was the first time I saw two Holy Fathers in the same place, because it was just a few months after Pope Francis was elevated to Pontificate and Holy Father Benedict XVI was there as well. It is an emotion that words can't describe. You are in the presence of people who are making the history of this world, and you can truly feel the spirituality around them.

Have you met the Popes? Could you share what you were feeling?

Over the years, I have been blessed with the possibility to meet Saint John Paul II and the Holy Fathers Benedict XVI and Francis in separate occasions. In all these circumstances I have always felt moved, with a great interior peace together with the understanding that these moments were a Blessing from our Lord, knowing that thousands of people would like to have similar opportunities, and for this reason I have always treasured the memories of these encounters.

The Holy Fathers gave me some good suggestions about life: to study hard, always follow my dreams and pursue what I want and to try to leave the world a little bit better than I found.

Your father is doing a very important job. Did you have a normal family life?

My father has always lived his job as a Mission and a service to the Church, and like a gift from the Providence. When he was

asked to take on this service, he was working for the Italian intelligence service, and when he accepted this new job, the lives of all the members of our family were changed. Certainly for my sister, my mother and I it was a great change that we have always tried to live with a spirit of love for the Church where my parents, having been part of a Catholic youth group guided by the Franciscan order, had been grown up. This has been an example for my sister and me.

I wonder how your mum is feeling in this male-dominated place.

My mum is a teacher at the Lateran University. She teaches psychology. Life in Vatican is obviously peculiar for her. She cannot go around in a short dress which sometimes you would want to wear for receptions. It is just different than for example in our neighbour country, Italy. We go to Italy every day, we spend most of our life there. But when we go back to Vatican it is different country, different customs, rules. But for us it is the normality. So my mother was used to that. She knew that rather than to wear a short skirt, she would wear jeans and it was nothing that would bother her.

There were a lot of receptions, social occasions for you?

My father is always busy with his job, and therefore he doesn't have too much free time, and even my mom is a very reserved person. Therefore, it did not happen too often for us to go to social events, even though it did happen from time to time. For instance, I remember a beautiful reception, organized by a Polish man and good friend of my family, His Excellency Przemyslaw Jan Hauser, who is the ambassador of the Order of Malta to Antigua and Barbuda. The reception had been organized by Ambassador Hauser on the occasion of the unveiling of a documentary about the Vatican Museums that he had produced. Pope Benedict was present there. The film was shown in this beautiful auditorium called "Aula Nervi". That is the

place where general audiences take place when the weather is not fitted for people to stay outside, in Saint Peter's Square. The reception afterwards took place in the Vatican Museums.

Did you not feel alone as a child in a place where there were so few other children?

I attended school in Italy and my friends were mostly Italian, some were international. As I was saying before, certainly living in the Vatican is different from growing up in any other place, both for the size of the country, and for the fact that the State is built for the Mission of the Holy Father. Nonetheless, my friends and those of my sister often came by our apartment just like we used to go to our friends' places in Rome.

How did living in Vatican influence your attitude to the Church and faith? Sometimes things we are very familiar with become normal, ordinary and we may stop seeing any beauty in them.

For me, it was the opposite! For one's faith it is certainly important to be close to people in religious positions, but the most important thing is that you are so close to a very spiritual place. People from different backgrounds, ethnicities, sometimes even different religions, come to the Holy See. So one of my most favourite things to do when I am in the Vatican is visiting the Basilica of St. Peter. I have say that Saint Peter's Basilica is a piece of my heart. That is a place I go to whenever I have free time or I want to distract myself. I enter regularly, with other tourists. And it is beautiful to see how these people enter this temple of the Church, how they sometimes cry seeing the Pieta by Michelangelo. It is beautiful to see how they pray in front of the tomb of St. John Paul II for instance. It is beautiful to walk with them and see how these other people live their religious lives. It is never ordinary, because every day is different. Every meeting can give you a different insight about the Catholic Church that you never thought about. And for me it is just as

inspiring to listen to stories about very wealthy people who converted to catholicism, and about poor people who spent all their money to go on a pilgrimage to the St. Peter's. It is like a movie you watch a number of times: it is the same movie, but each time you see it, you notice different details, and each time you are reminded why you liked it so much.

Sounds like heaven.

Pretty close to heaven! It is beautiful and unique.

What are the main differences between the tasks of the Swiss guards and the Vatican gendarmerie?

The Swiss Guard is a small force maintained by the Holy See, it controls access to the borders of to the city-state and is responsible for the safety of the Pope, including the security of the Apostolic Palace. The Gendarmes take care of all the other aspects of security, including regular police activities, investigations and security of the Holy Father when he is not in his residence. Together they safeguard the Holy Father during celebrations and public events such as international trips.

Do you have people like dentist, shoemakers, hairdressers in the Vatican?

There health services, not a full hospital, for example you don't have first aid there, for that you would have go to Rome. But the citizens and employees of the Vatican can take advantage of the health facilities which include a dentist and other doctors. There is a pharmacy, a supermarket, and a duty-free shop. There is a barber, not a hairdresser I am afraid.

There is no maternity ward at the hospital I guess...

I think there is gynecologist, but you cannot be born in the Vatican. Since the establishment of the Vatican City State in 1929 with the Lateran Accords I don't think anyone was ever born in the Vatican, because there are no facilities there.

Can you play any sport within the walls?

At the moment there are no sports facilities in the Vatican with the exception of the Gendarmes and the Swiss Guards, who – I believe – have a gym inside their headquarters; very close to the Vatican, however, there are several facilities to practice all kinds of sports. One of those place is the oratory of S. Peter, where one can play several sports. That's where my sister and I used to go. As a matter of facts, as kids my sister and I used to play volleyball also outside our apartment in a small terrace.. My father was told by Monsignor Dziwisz that even the Holy Father John Paul II had seen us play and that he appreciated these breaks from staticity.

Would you describe life in Vatican as life in a bubble or life under a lot of control?

Obviously you are... not in a bubble but in a unique place. I always describe it as an entrance to a different world. Usually when you go to Vatican, you come from a traffic of Rome: cars honking at each other, sometimes people being nervous to get to places, tourists all over the street. And then you pass this gate, you tell the Swiss guard who you are and what is the reason for getting inside the Vatican. You pass the gendarmes who check again if you are entitled to get into Vatican and then it is all quiet. There are very few people, very few cars and even 50 meters from the entrance there is silence.

As Christmas is coming up, could you tell us what is Christmas like in the Vatican City and what do you usually do?

I believe that there's no better place to spend Christmas than Rome, and in particular the Vatican City. The Christmas season is certainly one of the most important times for the catholic liturgy and there's several beautiful celebration both during advent and of course during Christmas.

In our apartment there is a small painting that my mom takes out around December with a drawing of a heart and the

following phrase: "Per Natale tutti i cuori tornano a casa", which means that around Christmas all the hearts go back to their homes. That is certainly true for my family as we are always together for the Christmas celebrations. There are several suggestive traditions that take place inside and around the Vatican that we like to attend. For instance, every year a different country or region donates a Christmas tree to the Vatican, which is then decorated and placed in Saint Peter's Square right next to the life-size Nativity Scene (the "presepe") that is set up right in the center of the square; it is a family tradition that we go to the square around the 10th of December to see the lighting up of the tree and the unveiling of the nativity scene while listening to choirs chanting Christmas songs.

Finally another family tradition is to take part to the Christmas Eve mass celebrated by the Holy Father inside the Basilica of Saint Peter: that is truly a beautiful and spiritual celebration that is telecasted throughout the world.

Could you share what the Popes told you personally?

Over the years, I have been blessed with the possibility to meet Saint John Paul II and the Holy Fathers Benedict XVI and Francis in separate occasions. In all these circumstances I have always felt moved, with a great interior peace together with the understanding that these moments were a Blessing from our Lord, knowing that thousands of people would like to have similar opportunities, and for this reason I have always treasured the memories of these encounters.

The Holy Fathers gave me some good suggestions about life: to study hard, always follow my dreams and pursue what I want and to try to leave the world a little bit better that I found. |

LUCA GIANI – anno domini 1990, citizen of the Vatican, the son of the head of the Corps of Gendarmerie of Vatican City, studied international economic relations at Georgetown University in Washington, working in the investment company, he lives in the United States.

Dominicans for Sunday

July 3, 2016 | Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Friendship

IS 66:10-14C | PS 66 | LK 10:1-12, 17-20



NICANOR AUSTRIACO O.P.
USA

In today's gospel reading, Jesus commissions his disciples and sends them to cure the sick and to proclaim the kingdom of God. He sends them forth two-by-two. But why does he send them out in pairs rather than as individuals? It would have been more efficient to send the disciples out alone.

Many scripture scholars explain that the Lord sent his disciples out in pairs because the Mosaic Law prescribed two witnesses to give proper testimony (cf. Dt 19:15). This is certainly true. However, I would also propose another reason: Our Lord sent them forth two-by-two because he wanted to emphasize the importance of friendship in the Christian life.

At the heart of the Christian life, there is friendship, most importantly, our friendship with Christ. On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus told his disciples that they were his friends (cf. Jn 15:15). I imagine that his disciples were astonished at this announcement since the

ancients did not think that masters and servants could be friends! And yet the Lord made it so. Not surprisingly, therefore, St. Thomas Aquinas, OP, described the theological virtue of charity or love, as friendship with God (cf. *Summa theologiae* II.23.1). However, he also emphasized that not all love has the character of friendship. Only the love where one wishes good for his friend rather than for himself alone, is the true love of friendship. God calls us into his life as beloved friends because he desires only our happiness and our glory, and he calls us to do the same.

As Jesus loves us, so we are challenged to love our neighbors and our enemies. In our fractured and lonely societies, the Church needs to be a school of friendship that draws together everyone who is hungering and thirsting for authentic love. If we are to evangelize the world in the 21st century in the same way as the Lord called his disciples to do in the 1st century, we are called to evangelize it as friends and through the making of true friendships. This is the way of the gospel. |

Dominicans for Sunday

July 10, 2016 | Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

How to discover the sacredness of God

DT 30:10-14 | PS 69 | COL 1:15-20 | LK 10:25-37

MARCIN SZYMAŃSKI O.P.

Poland

Before we jump into the parable itself, let us focus first on the scholar of the law. He is a man of paradoxes. On one hand he is well versed in the Scriptures and has a profound understanding of them, as he is able to correctly point out the two greatest commandments of the Law. On the other hand, his actions appear to be quite disconnected from his knowledge. The whole discussion with Jesus is just to test the Lord. The scholar is not interested in an honest search for truth. Instead he is interested in proving his point and defeating his adversary. In his adopted stance against Jesus, the scholar becomes a “learned fool” – he knows the answer and yet he does not know what to do with it.

The scholar failed to understand that faith is not just a mere set of ideas or laws to be obeyed, but is first and foremost a relationship with God, from which flows relationship with others. In our

relationship with God we uncover truth not as an idea, but as a person – Jesus Christ. Our faith becomes a gift. In our faith we are called to adopt the position of a disciple, not of a scholar. We come to receive a gift, we come to learn about ourselves, about the universe, about God. That requires openness, which only can be achieved through the humility of a disciple.

Humility will also help us to get rid of all the preconceived notions, prejudices, and systems of thought which can cloud our mind, as it was in the case of the priest and the Levite from the parable, and as it was in the case of the scholar.

In this way, free and open to God’s message, we will be able to discover the sacredness of God and the sacredness of the other person. We will discover God in the other person. In this way and only in this way we can truly learn who is our brethren. |



Dimanche avec les dominicains

le 17 juillet 2016 | 16^e dimanche du temps ordinaire

D'abord écouter

Gn 18, 1-10a | Ps 14 (15) | Col 1, 24-28 | Lc 10, 38-42



MARCIN MAGDZIARZ O.P.

Poland

En lisant ce passage de l'Évangile sur la visite de Jésus chez les deux sœurs, Marthe et Marie, on peut avoir l'impression que Marthe est victime d'une injustice : bien qu'elle s'affaire à un service compliqué, le Christ fait l'éloge de sa sœur Marie qui est tranquillement assise à ses pieds. Il semble alors que Marie reçoive la récompense pour ne rien faire. Est-ce vrai ou y-a-t-il peut-être une autre raison pour cet éloge fait par le Seigneur ?

Si Marie est assise aux pieds de Jésus, c'est pour écouter attentivement sa parole. De telle sorte, elle accomplit – consciemment ou non – le premier commandement donné par Dieu à son peuple dans l'Ancien Testament : « Écoute, Israël ! Le Seigneur notre Dieu est le Seigneur Un. Tu aimeras le Seigneur ton Dieu de tout ton cœur, de tout ton être, de toute ta force » (Dt 6,4). Selon le Deutéronome, le premier acte d'amour pour Dieu, c'est d'écouter sa voix. Et Marie fait exactement

cela ! Tout au long du passage de l'Évangile, Marie ne prononce aucun mot, elle reste en silence, concentrée de toute sa force sur le Seigneur. Ainsi, Marie, qui ne faisait pas attention à elle-même, recevra de Jésus sa récompense.

Résister aux préoccupations, à la tentation de se comparer avec les autres, écouter attentivement Dieu – tout cela ne signifie pas être passif, bien au contraire, cela demande de nous une activité, une sorte de mobilisation intérieure et très concrète. Marie, même si elle ne le montre pas, est « active » de cette façon. L'éloge que Jésus fait d'elle est alors justifié.

N'oublions pas quand même que cette « activité » trouve son plein achèvement dans un engagement extérieur, selon la parole : « Heureux ceux qui écoutent la parole de Dieu et *la mettent en pratique* ! » (cf. Lc 8,21 ; 11,28). |

Dominikaner zum Sonntag

24. Juli 2016 | Sonntag der 17. Woche im Jahreskreis

Wer bittet, der empfängt

GEN 18,20-32 | PS 138 | KOL 2,12-14



MARTIN GRANDINGER O.P. Österreich

Wie kleine Kinder bitten die Jünger Jesus: Lehre uns beten! Zeig uns, wie das geht! Und wie so oft, gibt Jesus nicht eine einfache, eindimensionale Antwort. Ja, in diesem Evangelium (Lk 11, 1-13) gibt er ihnen etwas „Äußerliches“, Worte, das Vaterunser – aber eben nicht nur. Jesus geht es in seiner ganzen Verkündigung immer darum, dass „Außen“ und „Innen“ einander entsprechen. Ebenso wenig wie einen ent-leerten Gesetzesgehorsam, will Jesus ein leeres Beten. Ebenso wichtig wie die Worte, die Jesus seinen Jüngern beibringt, ist die Haltung, mit der sie beten sollen: mit Vertrauen. Es ist kein blindes Vertrauen, zu dem Jesus seine Jünger auffordert. Er erklärt es wieder einmal mit einem Gleichnis, damit wir es auch verstehen: Jedermann hilft doch seinem Freund, wenn er in Not ist, auch mitten in der Nacht, auch wenn es nicht „überlebenswichtig“ ist. Oder? Wer ein Freund ist, der hilft. Warum? Weil zum Freund-Sein dazugehört,

dem anderen Gutes zu wollen und – soweit möglich – Gutes zu tun. Und von hier ist es nur noch ein Schritt: Auch wenn wir uns Gott nicht ganz leicht als „Freund“ vorstellen können (weil er eben so anders ist und für uns nicht sichtbar), so glauben wir doch fest, dass er gut ist: gut in jeder Hinsicht; und dass er uns Gutes will. Warum sollte er es dann nicht tun? Und hier geht Jesus noch weiter: Gott ist doch nicht „nur“ ein Freund für uns, sondern er ist unser Vater, wir sind seine Kinder. Er kann doch gar nicht anders, als uns alles geben, was er hat: den Heiligen Geist.

Jesus gibt keine eindimensionale Antwort, sondern sozusagen eine dreidimensionale: Er gibt uns etwas Äußerliches, Worte, mit denen wir beten sollen. Er lehrt uns die innere Haltung, mit der wir beten sollen. Und er zeigt uns, wer wir sind: Kinder Gottes, beseelt von seinem Geist. Wenn wir das letzte verstanden haben, dann werden wir auch die Worte im Vaterunser anders beten. Und für die Zwischenzeit: Vertrauen! Wer bittet, der empfängt. |

Dominicans for Sunday

July 31, 2016 | Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



There is nothing I shall want

ECC 1:2; 2:21-23 | PS 90 | COL 3:1-5, 9-11 | LK 12:13-21

RICHARD UNSWORT O.P.

England

It is noted by scholars that Luke's Gospel has a particular concern for the poor. This can be discovered in all sorts of places by comparing it with the Gospels of Mark and Matthew; I am going to leave that for you to do yourselves. But I suggest that Luke also has a concern for the rich, which shows itself especially in today's gospel.

The danger for the rich is described by the Greek word *pleonexia*, and it means something more than just 'avarice'. It describes the tendency of those who have worldly goods never to be satisfied, but always to want more, and it is a combination of selfishness and fear. The selfishness of *pleonexia* is shown by the fact that the rich man is completely turned inwards: he only talks to himself in the story, and this symbolises the fact that his chasing after wealth has led him to forget about other people.

It is not just that he has stopped caring about other people but that he has made himself alone, cut himself off from others. This foolish man has no-one to talk to.

We know that in the modern world wealthy people are often surrounded by people happy to be their friends. But are they true friends, or just sycophants? Authentic friendship requires some sort of equality, a mutual esteem that can be threatened by economic inequality.

There are also well-known examples of people whose wealth has made them recluses, because they are afraid: afraid to lose what they have, only able to find comfort in acquiring more.

This is a pitiable state that any of us can fall into, even if our wealth is very limited. But Christ has come to set us free from fear, to turn us towards each other in love and generosity. Instead of wanting more, we who are sustained by the love of Christ can say, with the psalmist, 'there is nothing I shall want.' |