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## **Sacramentality in the Perspective of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** The article endeavours to show that the concept of sacramentality is one of the key ones for grasping the overall vision of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's theology. The German theologian does not refer the concept only to the seven sacramental signs of grace, but he uses it to interpret God's revelation in salvation (and creation) history, the Catholic interpretation of Sacred Scripture, insight into the mystery of the Church and the celebrated liturgy. Therefore, in this article the theme of sacramentality is taken up in its fundamental sense, in order to show that the material reveals the spiritual, that the past points to the future according to the 'promise-fulfilment' model. Sacramentality – according to Ratzinger – also refers to what man cannot produce by his own efforts, but must accept as a gift from God. Within these meanings, the sacramentality of creation, the Word and the Church as seen by the Bavarian cardinal and later pope will be discussed.

**Keywords:** Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, Church, interpretation of Scripture, liturgy, sacramentality

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### **Introduction**

Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, addressed the fundamental issue of defining the concept of “sacrament” in its deepest sense in many of his articles on sacramentology, but also ecclesiology. The German Pope believed that before speaking of the seven sacramental signs, it was necessary to deal with the very question of ‘sacramentality’ in its broad and most fundamental sense, since

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from Polish by Maciej Górnicki.

it is, according to Ratzinger, one of the most important concepts for understanding the essence of the Church's mission and action.

Thus, in the present paper we will not speak about the seven sacraments of the Church, but instead we would like, following Ratzinger, to make a step backwards and ask what a sacrament in general is, and what realities we can speak about as being sacramental. Therefore, in subsequent sections of the present paper, after presenting what comprises the essence of sacramentality, we will undertake the issue of sacramentality of the word, creation and the Church in the teaching of the German pope. In the conclusion we will try, following Ratzinger, to say what the meaning of the sacraments is today.

## **1. The Essence of Sacramentality**

### **1.1. Contemporary Crisis of the Idea of Sacramentality**

In at least some of his articles, Joseph Ratzinger noted that, although there has been a turn towards sacramentology in twentieth-century theology and that much has been done in the field of academic theology to place a renewed value on the concept of sacramentality, this does not translate into the pastoral and existential reality of Christians, who, despite talking about sacraments and being familiar with the term itself, treat it in a magical way or associate it with a “mythical age of humanity” that no longer has much in common with the rational and technical world.<sup>2</sup> Ratzinger believes that the idea of sacramentality is on the margin of most Christians' lives. This is largely because of the ubiquitous materialism and technicism with which characterizes our age. Ratzinger explains: “In a time when we have grown accustomed to seeing in the substance of things nothing but the material for human labour – when, in short, the world is regarded as matter and matter as material – initially there is no room left for that symbolic transparency of reality toward the eternal on which the sacramental principle is based. [...] One could indeed say

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 169; Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation,” 153–155.

that the sacramental idea presupposes a symbolist understanding of the world, whereas the contemporary understanding of the world is functionalist.”<sup>3</sup>

The Bavarian Cardinal states that for many modern people it seems outright absurd to attribute so much importance to pouring a bit of water on the head or laying hands on the head. They ask whether it can actually change their lives. Can life, which seems to be an ever-open and ever-changing reality, really be shaped, determined permanently by a rite once performed? Ratzinger notes that it is not only materialism, even in the Marxist heresy of reducing all reality to human labour or the material needed for that labour, that negatively affects the understanding of the idea of sacramentality. Equally harmful is the influence of the concept of an idealistically falsified human nature. Idealism, which found its peak in Fichte, makes modern man question the meaning of sacraments and worship in general: “Do I really have to go to church to meet God? Is the action of the spiritual God linked to material signs?”<sup>4</sup> Although we do not find references to Romano Guardini in Ratzinger’s articles quoted here, one can easily see a great convergence of thought between these authors in their evaluation of contemporary Christian awareness and perception of the sacraments. Guardini asked in 1964, in his famous letter addressed to the participants of the Third Liturgical Congress in Mainz, if modern man, man of the industrial and technical age, is still at all capable of a liturgical act, of celebrating and participating in the liturgy?<sup>5</sup>

The American Benedictine Cassian Folsom – analysing Guardini’s writings – makes the diagnosis that the problem lies not in the liturgical ritual itself, but in what he calls the “great divorce” between the sensual part and the rational part of the soul, and the divorce between soul and body. The problem is that we have become – also in the liturgy – slaves to Cartesian rationalism and have lost the symbolic imagination, while the answer to extreme materialism has become extreme spiritualism, which is also

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<sup>3</sup> Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation,” 153–154.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation,” 165–166.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Guardini, *Formacja liturgiczna*, 28.

an anthropological error.<sup>6</sup> Guardini ultimately says: “What lies in the liturgical attitude, what prays, offers and acts, is not the ‘soul,’ not the ‘interior,’ but the ‘man.’ The whole man is the vehicle of liturgical action. Certainly the soul, but only insofar as it animates the body. Certainly the interior, but only insofar as it manifests itself in the body. [...] Thus the first practical task is outlined. On the basis of the inner transformations taking place in our time, we must learn again to relate to the religious sphere as people in our fullness. We must also learn to pray with the body. Body postures, gestures and actions must find their direct religious meaning. We must learn to express our interior in what is external and to read the inner from the outer signs. In other words: we must become capable of using symbols again.”<sup>7</sup>

It seems that Ratzinger fully shares this diagnose of Guardini, writing in one of the articles: “then his relationship to God, if it is to be a human relationship to God, must be just as man is: corporeal, fraternal, and historical.”<sup>8</sup> In yet another place he writes: “in order to understand the nature of the sacrament – its lasting validity and the manner in which it reveals reality – one would therefore have to inquire about what a symbol is, [...] and to what extent it is possible to gain access to reality in the first place.”<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2. Biblical Meaning of the *Mysterion/Sacramentum* Concept

In asking about the essence of ‘sacrament,’ the German cardinal refers to the Protestant critique of the sacramental idea by Eberhard Jüngel. This Lutheran professor from Tübingen noted that the Latin term *sacramentum* was, in the Church fathers, a translation of the Greek term *mysterion*. Therefore, in order to properly understand what a sacrament is at all, it is necessary to see what meaning the term *mysterion* takes on in the writings of the New Testament. Ratzinger summarises the conclusions reached by Jüngel in these words:

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Folsom, *Człowiek współczesny*, 27–44.

<sup>7</sup> Guardini, *Formacja liturgiczna*, 39, 55.

<sup>8</sup> Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation,” 166.

<sup>9</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 169.

“in the New Testament [...] the word *mysterion* seldom appears in the first place; but secondly [...] where it does appear, it has christological and eschatological connotations. Nowhere, however, does it show any relation to cult or liturgy, much less to the mystery cults, the sacramental actions of the non-Christian world.”<sup>10</sup> The Lutheran theologian even states that the ancient fathers and later medieval theologians, by linking the concept of *mysterion* to Greek mystery cults, depart from its original biblical meaning, and here the Catholic Church’s departure from the Bible in general as a result of the Hellenisation of Christianity is revealed. According to him, the ancient Church introduces the sacraments as cultic signs of grace, precisely in order to create a counterbalance or competition to the pagan mysteries. He concludes, therefore, that this Catholic understanding of the sacrament, which arose in the ancient Church, needs to be completely reinterpreted, which was done by Martin Luther.<sup>11</sup>

The Bavarian cardinal, responding to such a serious charge by Jüngel against the Catholic Church and Tradition in general, states that in order to grasp the proper meaning of the term *mysterion/sacramentum*, it is necessary to understand what Tradition is and what the interpretation of Scripture in the Church consists in. Answers to these questions require not only analysing the original meaning of one term, but seeing the sources of its historical development. Analysing the entire course of Ratzinger’s reflections obviously exceeds the scope of our article, so we will present the steps of the German cardinal’s reflections in points and go straight to the most important conclusions.

- I. There are no references to the concept of *mysterion* in the classical writings of the Old Testament. It only appears in the apocalyptic and wisdom literature, but not in a cultic sense, but simply as ‘a secret thing.’ One can observe here a meaning such as “a revelation concealed beneath symbols, a veiled proclamation of future mysteries determined by God.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 171.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Jüngel, “Das Sakrament,” 9–61.

<sup>12</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 173.

- II. The term *mysterion* in Mark 4:11 has – according to Ratzinger – such a meaning that “behind the narrative parable with which Jesus faces the people dwells a hidden argument that leads down into the depths of reality.”<sup>13</sup> In other New Testament writings, the term *mysterion* occurs primarily in St Paul (21 times) in only three epistles (1 Cor, Eph and Col), demonstrating that the term is still in an open process of evolution, which we already observe in the New Covenant texts as well as later in the age of the Fathers. We can express the most important conclusion of Paul’s understanding of *mysterion* in these words of the Bavarian theologian: “The *mysterion* of the Torah and of all the parables has become visible for him in the crucified Christ. He is the hitherto hidden content that stands behind the manifold words and events of Scripture, the mystery of God that is at the foundation of everything that exists.”<sup>14</sup> Paul, referring to the notions of mystery cults in Corinth, interprets the concept of *mysterion* quite to the contrary, pointing out that it is not some hidden formula, some gnosis of an elite group, but that the *mysterion* of God is a person – Jesus Christ – in whom all history finds meaning and all Scripture finds its explanation. Ratzinger thus concludes that the concept of *mysterion* is intimately connected to the question of the correct interpretation of Scripture, which in its entirety – Old and New Testaments – speaks of Jesus and the Church and in him finds its deepest fulfilment.<sup>15</sup>
- III. The reflections presented above lead Ratzinger to the fundamental conclusion that the individual words of Scripture are mysteries, that is, reflections of something great in something small, in the way that Christ is visible in each of these words. But this does not refer only to the words, or even to the individual books of Scripture, but also to the events which these words describe, for they too are mysteries, that is, symbolic references to Christ. Ratzinger therefore concludes that in St

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<sup>13</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 173.

<sup>14</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 174.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 174.

Paul we are dealing with the threefold meaning of the word *mysterion*: sacrament of words, sacrament of events and sacrament of creation.<sup>16</sup>

- IV. This leads us to the meaning of *mysterion* that we find in the Church fathers. If the individual words of Scripture are interpreted as referring us beyond themselves to Christ, they are therefore “types of him who was to come.” Ratzinger points out that in the linguistic practice of the fathers, the terms *typos*, *mysterion* and *sacramentum* function almost as synonyms.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the term *sacramentum* is nothing other than the fusion of the terms *typos* and *mysterion* that took place in the age of the Fathers, the essence of which is the Christological interpretation of Scripture, which is the achievement of St Paul. Thus, the ancient understanding of the *sacramentum* in its typological interpretation of Scripture is that the whole Old Testament leads to Christ, that in Him all the words of Scripture and the prophets are fulfilled, that finally the “covenant” takes its final form in Him, becoming the New Covenant.<sup>18</sup> From here we also see that the unity of the Bible, the interpenetration of the Old and New Testaments and their interpretation in the light of Christ, is, as Scott Hahn argues, the key to Benedict XVI’s biblical theology.<sup>19</sup> Ratzinger’s critique of Jüngel’s claim that the ancient meaning of sacrament has nothing to do with Scripture is thus refuted, and the connection of the sacraments to the whole of creation and history is made visible, a point to which we will return in section three of this article.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 177.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 177.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “Form and Content,” 317.

<sup>19</sup> Hahn, *Covenant and Communion*, 100.

### 1.3. From the Ancient *Mysterion* to the Seven Sacraments of the Church

Benedict XVI poses another extremely important question: how did we move from this broad concept of sacrament in the ancient Church at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to a specific understanding of sacrament as one of the seven liturgical signs of grace? In answering this question, Benedict XVI observes – referring above all to the Letter to the Hebrews – that not only the words of Scripture and the events of which they speak are *sacramenta futuri*, but also the liturgical actions of the Old Covenant point to Christ. Here the difference between promise and fulfilment, preparation and presence, Old and New Covenant is revealed. Whereas all Old Testament worship was leaning towards what had not yet appeared, and was celebrated as a foreshadowing of what is yet to come, the New Testament is no longer directed towards the future, but in it there has been a fulfilment and presence of the reality for which everything was waiting in suspense, which is simply Christ the Lord. Therefore, Ratzinger, pointing out the proper meaning of the term *ex opere operato Christi*, concludes: “the sacraments now no longer work by foreshadowing and asking; rather, they are effective as a result of what has already happened, and therein is manifest the act of liberation accomplished by Christ. Man no longer has to rely on his own doing and going toward some undisclosed thing that is yet to come; instead, he can entrust himself to the reality that is already waiting for him.”<sup>20</sup> Ratzinger will develop this theme in his most important liturgical book *The Spirit of Liturgy* in the chapter devoted to the question of time and space in liturgy,<sup>21</sup> but he will mention it also as the Holy Father in the apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, writing: “As the Church Fathers rightly say, *figura transit in veritatem*: the foreshadowing has given way to the truth itself” (*SCar* 11).

Ratzinger concludes his entire argument by saying that this liberation, which was a shift from the shadows to the truth of reality, was also characterised by a simplification of the complex cultic structures

<sup>20</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 180.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “The Spirit of the Liturgy,” 31–37; see also the discussion of this issue in: Zatwardnicki, *Od teologii objawienia*, 684–696.



of the Old Testament in favour of the simplicity of the Eucharist and other celebrations, which become – in the words of the Fathers – *rationalia*: accessible to reason. This “simplicity of fulfilment” means, in practice, that there are only a few *sacramenta* in the New Covenant, the number and shape of which would ultimately be clarified by medieval theology and the rulings of the Church’s Magisterium. It should be noted here, however, that the number “seven” itself is not accidental either, but it too has its source in a typological reading of the Bible.

Benedict XVI concludes his article *On the concept of sacrament* with some conclusions, which we will develop later in our study.

The first conclusion<sup>22</sup> concerns the “sacramentality of creation,” since “the symbols of creation are signs pointing to Christ, and Christ is the fulfillment not only of history but also of creation.”<sup>23</sup>

The second conclusion refers to what we call the “sacramentality of the word,” since “understanding the sacraments presupposes a definite relationship to Scripture,”<sup>24</sup> which will not be read backwards, but in the way oriented towards the future (*sacramenta*) in the scheme promise-fulfillment, shadow-reality.

The third conclusion points to the necessity of understanding the Church as a sacrament, since the very understanding of the concept of sacrament “presupposes the historical continuity of God’s activity and, as its specific locus, the living community of the Church, which is the sacrament in the sacraments.”<sup>25</sup>

Finally, the German theologian concludes that the essence of the sacraments is to grasp that in them the Church does not act as some kind of association, but works on the basis of what she herself has not constructed, in which she gives more than she herself can give, since she offers only what she herself has first received. Ratzinger returns to this thought, for example, in his text *On the Essence of the Priesthood*, writing: “Sacrament means: I give what I cannot give myself; I do what does not come from me; I am a messenger and

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<sup>22</sup> In Ratzinger’s article, in the order of listing, this is the second conclusion.

<sup>23</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 184.

<sup>24</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 184.

<sup>25</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 184.

have become a mediator of what has been given to me by another.”<sup>26</sup> It also means that man can only encounter God in a human way, that is, in human relationships, in corporeality and historicity. It also means that man cannot decide where, when and how God is to encounter him, but also that he can only accept God’s presence and action as a gift.<sup>27</sup> This is precisely the essence of sacramentality according to Ratzinger.

## 2. The Sacramentality of Creation

Undertaking the reflection on “sacramentality of creation” in Ratzinger’s thought, we will refer to only one theme, the idea of sacramentality as the foundation of human existence. Of necessity, the topic of the cosmic dimension of Christian liturgy,<sup>28</sup> important for Ratzinger, will be omitted here, where we will see that in the Church’s liturgy there is an “anticipation of the eschatological transubstantiation of the whole created world.”<sup>29</sup>

Just as Jüngel was critical of the very notion of “sacrament” in its Catholic understanding, he also believed that neither creation nor history could be understood sacramentally. This is so, according to the Lutheran theologian, because, from the perspective of Christ, creation proves to be corrupted by sin, while history is merely the history of the denial of God. The Catholic tradition – Karl-Heinz Menke observes – sees the issue quite differently, since everything created is brought into existence by the Word, who in Jesus became man and thus already “through creation, and especially through the biblically attested history of the covenant, God has prepared his self-revelation in Christ in such a way that one can speak of the sacramental quality of everything real.”<sup>30</sup>

The same way of the symbolical understanding of created reality, which points to the dimension of eternity and refers us to its

<sup>26</sup> Ratzinger, “O istocie kapłaństwa,” 39.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation,” 200.

<sup>28</sup> On the cosmic dimension of Christian liturgy see above all: Ratzinger, “The Spirit of the Liturgy,” 12–19.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Zatwardnicki, *Od teologii objawienia*, 740.

<sup>30</sup> Menke, *Sakramentalität*, 68.

Creator, can be found in Ratzinger. In his article *The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, he pointed out that we can speak of certain “sacraments of creation,” that is, of such nodal points of human existence in which the essence of man and his relationship to God is revealed, and which are based not on the spiritual but on the biological nature of man. These nodal points, which are birth and death, the eating of food and the union of the two sexes, transcend the biological dimension in the human person and acquire a new meaning. It turns out that the most human actions are not only spiritual or merely corporeal-biological acts, but that in the human being the biological gains a new and deeper meaning, because the human being is also able to express the spiritual through his or her corporeality.<sup>31</sup>

Let us stop at just one of these nodal points discussed by Ratzinger, which is eating a meal, an activity that is definitely biological in nature. Unlike animals, however, man does not eat just to satisfy a basic physiological need. The activity of eating undertaken by humans encompasses many more dimensions of life than simply satisfying hunger. Here, it is about feasting, that is, meeting another person, creating a community of home or a community of friends, sharing the richness of being together, enriching oneself by the word heard from one another, by mutual conversation. It is also about savouring what we eat; after all, we do not eat everything, we try to diversify our cuisine as much as possible, to change it, to discover new, previously unknown flavours. In contrast to animals, we do not eat dirty food off the floor, because we take care that the food is tasty, aromatic and looks aesthetically pleasing on the plate. In fact, we say that we eat not only with our mouth, but also with our eyes and our sense of smell. Taste is the responsibility of all our senses, not just the taste buds on our tongue.

The table becomes for us a place to celebrate important events, anniversaries, anniversaries or liturgical festivals, to experience infatuation and love together, as well as suffering, if only when the family gathers after a funeral to remember a deceased person. It is also about a person’s experience of living as a recipient, that he

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation,” 188.

does not create his being on his own. He experiences himself, says Ratzinger, as a person undeservedly endowed and at the same time coexisting with things and with other people. We could remain at the level of satisfying a physiological need, of “filling” the stomach with something digestible, but man does much more during a meal. He does what is biological in a spiritual way.<sup>32</sup> The German pope would even say that the transformation of food into a meal is the prototype of what is sacramental.<sup>33</sup> Everything we do in our lives can be transformed by man, can take on a deeper meaning, can be an expression of the “sacramental” nature of man: the material and sensual can become a way of expressing the inner and spiritual, and at the same time the spiritual has no other way of being realized than through the mediation of the corporeal.

We need now return to what we said earlier, namely that it is at the heart of the Christian understanding of sacramentality to observe that the words of Scripture, historical events and elements of worship do not retain us to themselves, but refer us to something further, revealing to us God and his love revealed in the incarnate Word. This will, according to Ratzinger, apply to created reality in general, which is why he writes in relation to water: “Water is not just H<sub>2</sub>O, a chemical compound that one can change by an appropriate method into other compounds and use for all sorts of purposes – in the water from a spring that the thirsty traveler encounters in the desert, something becomes visible of the mystery of refreshment that creates new life in the midst of despair; in the powerful waves of a river, on whose crests the brightness of the sun is reflected, something becomes visible of the might of the glory of creative love [...]; in the majesty of the sea glimmers something of the mystery that we designate with the word ‘eternity.’ That is just one example to suggest what is meant when we say: Things are more than things.”<sup>34</sup>

Ratzinger says that the dimension of eternity is inscribed in the temporal, created reality itself, which refers us to what is hidden behind it, further and deeper. Here we could follow David

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation,” 156–157.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation,” 156.

<sup>34</sup> Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation,” 161.

W. Fagerberg's statement that just as "the purpose of a watch is to tell time, [...] so the goal of creation is a sacrament"<sup>35</sup>; and quote after him the words of the Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov, which explain more precisely what he means: "Everything is destined for its liturgical fulfilment [...]. The destiny of the water element is to participate in the mystery of the epiphany, the destiny of the tree is to grow into the cross; the earth is to receive the body of the Lord Jesus to rest on the great Sabbath day [...]. The olive oil and the water find their fulfilment as elements bringing grace to a renewed man; the grain and the vine find their culmination in the Eucharistic chalice."<sup>36</sup> Ratzinger writes in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, referring to Teilhard de Chardin, that the transubstantiated Host is the anticipation of the transubstantiation of matter and its divinisation in Christological "fullness."<sup>37</sup>

Of course, what is true of every created thing takes on particular significance with regard to man, who discovers that he is created by Love for a relationship of love, that he is wanted by God and called to a relationship with Him, so he is "loved by God in another way than all the other beings below him-known in order to know in return, loved in order to love in return."<sup>38</sup> Thus it becomes evident that man can live forever by virtue of being in God's memory, which knows no end. The Bavarian cardinal concludes that this openness of the created world, which is the basis of the principle of sacramentality, is deeply inscribed in human existence. For this reason, it can even be said that "the sacramental communication with the eternal establishes man himself."<sup>39</sup> However, from the point of view of Christian theology, when discussing the principle of sacramentality, we cannot stop only at the sacramental dimension of the created cosmos, but we should see that the sacraments include us in the story of God self-revealing himself to his creation. And this brings us to the next point of our reflection, which is the question of the "sacramentality of the word,"

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<sup>35</sup> Fagerberg, *Theologia prima*, 360.

<sup>36</sup> Evdokimov, *Sztuka ikony*, 103–104.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, "The Spirit of the Liturgy," 16.

<sup>38</sup> Ratzinger, "The Sacramental Foundation," 162.

<sup>39</sup> Ratzinger, "The Sacramental Foundation," 162.

to which we have already alluded to some extent in the first section of this article.

### 3. Sacramentality of the Word

When speaking of the “sacramentality of the word” in the Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI approach,<sup>40</sup> we must first of all refer to the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini*, which the German pope published on 30th September 2010 as the fruit of the 16th Synod of Bishops on “The Word of God in the life and mission of the Church” (2008). The former Prior of the ecumenical community of Bose, Enzo Bianchi, one of the participants in the synod, suggests that it was due to him that already at the stage of the elaboration of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, the opinion appeared that the People of God do not perceive the sacramental character of the Word of God proclaimed in the liturgy.<sup>41</sup> Subsequently, the theme returned during the debate of the synod itself, the proof of which was one of the proposals published as the synod’s final document: “The Synod Fathers hope that theological reflection on the sacramentality of the word of God can be developed.”<sup>42</sup> This topic, no doubt, inspired Benedict XVI to devote an entire paragraph in the exhortation *Verbum Domini* precisely to the issue of the “sacramentality of the word,” which was regarded as a genuine novelty and a great theological achievement, since it was the first time such a statement was found in a magisterial document.<sup>43</sup> To be precise, however, it should be noted that the Latin text of the exhortation speaks of *qualitas sacramentalis Verbi* – “the sacramental quality of the Word.” Without denying the fact that Bianchi addressed this topic during the Synod and that perhaps the synodal debate itself prompted Benedict XVI to write this paragraph of the exhortation,

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<sup>40</sup> The topic can be explored in depth by referring to the article: Bachanek, “Sakramentalna struktura,” 215–229.

<sup>41</sup> Bianchi, “Sakramentalność słowa,” 165; XII Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum laboris*, 33.

<sup>42</sup> XII Synod of Bishops, *Final List of Propositions*, 7: “Unity between the Word of God and the Eucharist.”

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Bianchi, “Sakramentalność słowa,” 166.

it must be acknowledged that in the theology of the German thinker this topic had already been present much earlier, although perhaps not explicitly called “sacramentality of the Word.” Rather, Ratzinger was addressing the causal character of the word of God, its relationship to the Eucharist and, above all, the question of interpreting the events and the words of Scripture that bear witness to them in a Christocentric perspective.

### 3.1. The Incarnate Word Analogy and the Sacramental Nature of Scripture

Let us return, then, to the reflection we undertook earlier in this article in discussing Ratzinger’s thought on the transition in the ancient Church from the Greek concept of *mysterion* to the Latin *sacramentum*. There we came to the conviction, already expressed by St Augustine, that “Scripture as a Whole is sacramentum,”<sup>44</sup> since both the words of the Bible (Old and New Testaments) and the events described through them are symbolic references to Christ. The full meaning of the events and words of Scripture can only be discovered in Christ. In fact, Jesus himself, in joining the disciples fleeing to Emmaus, uses typology as a system of references that was necessary for him to show them how the resurrection was predicted in the Old Testament: “beginning with Moses through all the prophets He expounded to them what in all the Scriptures referred to Him” (Luke 24:27). The very process by which events correspond to deeper meanings<sup>45</sup> can be called typology, too, as well as such a reading of the Bible which includes the pattern of promise and its fulfilment.<sup>46</sup> Ratzinger will repeatedly return to the adagium coined by his theological and spiritual master, that is the Holy Bishop of Hippo: *Novum*

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<sup>44</sup> Ratzinger, “On the Concept of Sacrament,” 176; Augustinus Hipponensis, *Epistula 55*, XXI, 38 (CCL 31, 265): *Nullum mihi sacramentum, aut aliquis sermo admodum obscurior de sacris Litteris aperitur.*

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Mazza, *Mystagogy*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Hahn, *Moc słowa*, 38.

*in Vetere latet et in Novo Vetus patet* – “The New Testament is hidden in the Old and the Old is made manifest in the New” (cf. *VD* 41).<sup>47</sup>

We note, however, that with Ratzinger – even though this topic is very important to him – it is not only a matter of overcoming the modern tendencies in the interpretation of Scripture, which, rejecting typological interpretation, reduces the biblical text only to its literary-historical dimension.<sup>48</sup> We could even speak of the sacramental character of revelation in the German theologian’s case, since he places the priority of events over the words that testify to them, while stressing that no dualism can be introduced between event and word.<sup>49</sup> In Christ, word and reality are one, which we can also see in the story of the road to Emmaus, where Cleophas told of Jesus “who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” (Luke 24:19). We refer here to the Emmaus pericope because it will be the point of reference for Benedict in the exhortation *Verbum Domini*. He finally notes that the source of the sacramentality of the word of God is the mystery of the incarnation, the truth that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). The mystery of God is revealed to us in the ‘flesh of the Son’ so that St John could say: “this we declare to you [...] what we have heard of the Word of life, what we have seen with our own eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands” (1 John 1:1). The question of the sacramentality of Scripture also relates to this *analogia Verbi incarnati*, since the Word of God can now be recognised through the prism of the “sign,” which are human words and human gestures. Louis-Marie Chauvet will even say that “Scripture is the first

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<sup>47</sup> Augustinus Hipponensis, *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* II, 73 (PL 34, 623); Ratzinger, *Wielość religii*, 27, 41.

<sup>48</sup> Ratzinger (“On the Concept of Sacrament,” 178) calls this tendency one of the main reasons of the crisis of catholicism in the contemporary era; on this topic see also the foreword by Benedict XVI to the first volume of the trilogy devoted to Jesus (*Jezus z Nazaretu*, 119–128). At the same time Ratzinger constantly emphasizes that the very testimony of the New Testament is characterized by a higher historical credibility than continuously changing hypotheses of the historical-critical sciences; cf. Hahn, *Covenant and Communion*, 95–100.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Zatwardnicki, *Od teologii objawienia*, 674.



sacrament of the Word of God.”<sup>50</sup> Benedict XVI adds in *Verbum Domini*: “The sacramental character of revelation points in turn to the history of salvation, to the way that word of God enters time and space, and speaks to men and women, who are called to accept his gift in faith” (*VD* 56). It is worth adding here that Benedict XVI, in stressing the sacramental horizon of Revelation, referred to his predecessor St John Paul II.<sup>51</sup>

Such understanding of revelation, including a sacramental horizon, allows us to return to the question of interpreting the text of Scripture read in the Church, above all in the liturgy, which “is the privileged setting in which God speaks to us in the midst of our lives” (*VD* 52). Ratzinger will speak of a kind of “surplus of meaning,”<sup>52</sup> which the literal biblical text possesses. The word will always be deeper, it will refer to a deeper meaning than the literal content alone testifies to. For Benedict XVI, this means that there is a need to rework a methodology for reading Scripture that takes into account this “self-transcendence of the words of Scripture towards the divine Word.”<sup>53</sup>

### 3.2. Efficacy of the Word of God

The analogy of the incarnation, that is, the fact that the Word/word of God strives to become incarnate, to become flesh – *factum est verbum Dei* (Luke 3:2), leads us to the theme of the efficacy of the Word of God. The very term “efficacy” refers us to the classical definition of a sacrament, which is an “efficacious sign of grace,” that is, one which not only signifies grace but also causes it.<sup>54</sup> Benedict XVI notes in the exhortation *Verbum Domini* that “the relationship between word and sacramental gesture is the liturgical expression of God’s activity in the history of salvation through the performative character of the word itself” (*VD* 53). With his word, God creates

<sup>50</sup> Chauvet, “Parole et Sacrement,” 212.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 16; Zatwardnicki, *Od teologii objawienia*, 156.

<sup>52</sup> Ratzinger, *Kościół. Pielgrzymująca wspólnota*, 28.

<sup>53</sup> Ratzinger, *Nowa pieśń*, 84. See more on this in: Hahn, *Covenant and Communion*, 102–112.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Woźniak, “Znak, osoba, tajemnica,” 70.

the world because what he says – becomes reality. The very Hebrew term *dabar* indicates this efficacy of the word, since it can mean both “word” and “deed, fact, event.”<sup>55</sup> God’s word becomes a reality, it happens. St Thomas Aquinas writes that *dicere Dei est facere*.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the German Pope says, in the liturgy too we can see this causal character of God’s word, which accomplishes what it says (cf. *VD* 53).

When speaking of the efficacy of God’s word in the liturgy, it must also be emphasised that Ratzinger sees the efficacy of the word which active *here and now*. It is not only about the creative efficacy of God’s word, nor is it about the historical action of the word as witnessed in the Old and New Testaments, but also about the fact that in the liturgy God speaks to us in the present time of our lives, so that “word of God is accompanied by the interior working of the Holy Spirit who makes it effective in the hearts of the faithful” (*VD* 52). In one of his homilies, Benedict refers to the story of St Anthony and St Francis of Assisi, whose lives were completely transformed by the word they heard during the liturgy.<sup>57</sup> Here we see that the word of God is causal and transformative of human life.

Let us just add that this opens up an extremely interesting and important topic in Ratzinger’s theology of *anamnesis*, i.e., the liturgical making present of unique historical events, which the German theologian addresses in particular in his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. A broader treatment of this topic, however, exceeds the limits of our study.<sup>58</sup> Let us summarise these reflections with just one sentence from this most important liturgical work by Joseph Ratzinger: “On liturgical feasts the deeds of God in the past are made present. The feasts are a participation in God’s action in time. [...] In past history Christ with his sacraments is on his way through the ages. We are taken into the events. The events themselves

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<sup>55</sup> “The Hebrew concept ‘dabar,’ usually translated as ‘word,’ really conveys both the meaning of word and act. God says what he does and does what he says.” (Benedict XVI, Message, 9 April 2006).

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Super II Cor.* 1, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Address, 2 February 2008.

<sup>58</sup> We can refer here to the work of Zatwardnicki, *Od teologii objawienia*, 684–696.

transcend the passing of time and become present in our midst through the sacramental action of the Church. The centring of all history in Christ is both the liturgical transmission of that history and the expression of a new experience of time, in which past, present, and future make contact, because they have been inserted into the presence of the risen Lord.<sup>59</sup>

### 3.3. Eucharistic Analogy

The final theme we need to take up, following the successor of John Paul II, is the theology of Christ's presence in the word in analogy with the Eucharistic presence. In *Verbum Domini* we read: "By approaching the altar and partaking in the Eucharistic banquet we truly share in the body and blood of Christ. The proclamation of God's word at the celebration entails an acknowledgment that Christ himself is present, that he speaks to us, and that he wishes to be heard. [...] Christ, truly present under the species of bread and wine, is analogously present in the word proclaimed in the liturgy" (*VD* 56). In showing this theme of the presence of Christ in the preached word, Benedict XVI refers to the Fathers of the Church, especially St Jerome,<sup>60</sup> but also to the statement of *Vaticanum II*, which in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Liturgy points to the real, although different from the eucharistic one, presence of Christ in the word (cf. *SC* 7).

It is necessary, as Sławomir Zatwardnicki rightly points out, to avoid in this analogy any parallelism that could "suggest two different presences of one and the same Lord,"<sup>61</sup> remembering at the same time that they are not identical. Janusz Królikowski suggests that during the Council's debate on the ways of Christ's presence in the liturgy, the danger of equating Christ's presence in the Word and under the sacramental forms was pointed out. However, the discussion and the texts of the Council went in the direction that, while the importance of Scripture in the liturgy was recognised,

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<sup>59</sup> Ratzinger, "The Spirit of the Liturgy," 71–72.

<sup>60</sup> Hieronymus, *In Psalmum* 147 (CCSL 78, 337–338).

<sup>61</sup> Zatwardnicki, *Od teologii objawienia*, 715.

at the same time these two modes of Christ's presence were not placed on the same level.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, Benedict XVI will try to show the real presence of Christ in the proclaimed word, but he will speak of an analogy, that is, a similarity to the Eucharistic presence, which at the same time assumes their difference, since only in the case of the Eucharistic presence do we speak of a substantial presence. This subject is discussed in detail by Sławomir Zatwardnicki in his monumental monograph *From the Theology of Revelation to the Theology of Inspiration*.<sup>63</sup>

*Analogia Eucharistiae* also serves to show that Church reveres both the presence of Christ *sub specibus Scripturarum*, and *sub specibus Panis Vinique*, which is expressed in the famous passage from *Dei Verbum*: "The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body" (*DV* 21). It is worth noting that the proclamation of the Word in the liturgy is accompanied by similar – though not all – gestures and signs of reverence as the Blessed Sacrament: the candles, the incensing, or the gesture of kissing the Gospel Book/lecture and kissing the altar. However, we do not kneel before the lectionary or adore it as we do before the Blessed Sacrament. In this analogy between the liturgy of the word and the Eucharistic liturgy, Benedict XVI points also to the epicletic action of the Holy Spirit, who is invoked both when the word is to be proclaimed in order to make it effective in the hearers and when the bread and wine are to be transformed into the body and blood of Christ (cf. *VD* 16, 52). Therefore, Scott Hahn, discussing Ratzinger's theology of the sacramentality of the word, will say that "The theologian, then, must approach Scripture almost in an attitude of worship."<sup>64</sup> Here, too, we must remember that the different, yet analogous, manner of Christ's presence in the Word and the sacrament of flesh and blood, implies also arise different ways of worshipping the Word and the Blessed Sacrament. We observe that

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Królikowski, *Słowo Boże i Eucharystia*, 75, 78.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Zatwardnicki, *Od teologii objawienia*, 680–684.

<sup>64</sup> Hahn, *Covenant and Communion*, 88.

there is an analogy in the gestures of veneration, but at the same time the Pope makes it clear, following St Bernard of Clairvaux,<sup>65</sup> that Christianity is not a “religion of the book” but of the living Word (cf. *VD* 7), and therefore, one does not treat the book of Scripture with the act of *latria* veneration, which is proper to the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>66</sup>

#### 4. Sacramentality of the Church

The last point in our article, completing the perspective in which Joseph Ratzinger sees the concept of sacramentality, is the question of the sacramentality of the Church. This topic, which is particularly present in studies on the ecclesiology of Vatican II, is most often linked to theologians such as Karl Rahner,<sup>67</sup> Otto Semmelroth<sup>68</sup> and Edward Schillebeeckx.<sup>69</sup> Rahner’s and Semmelroth’s proposals not only speak of the Church as a “great sacrament” (H. Klee) or a “sacramental mystery” (J. Scheeben), but see the Church as a primary, principal, universal sacrament (*Ursakrament/Wurzelsakrament*).<sup>70</sup> They point out that it is impossible to understand the sacramentality of the Church without anchoring it in Christology, since the Church prolongs and actualises the one and true “primordial sacrament/prasacrament,” which is Jesus Christ. And from the Church, as it were, radiate the seven efficacious sacramental signs, which are the highest degree and at the same time the practical self-realisation of the Church. In the Rahnerian approach, the direction of the understanding of sacramentality – to use an anthropological metaphor – moves from the Head (Christ) to the body of the body (the Church), in order to reach the members (the seven sacraments).<sup>71</sup>

The theology of the sacramentality of the Church, as we have said above, also found an important place in the documents of the Second

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Bernard de Clairvaux, *Homilia super missus est*, IV, 11 (PL 183, 86B).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Zatwardnicki, *Od teologii objawienia*, 683.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Rahner, *Kirche und Sakramente*.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament*; Semmelroth, *La Iglesia como sacramento*, 321–370.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Schillebeeckx, *Chrystus, Sakrament*.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Granados García, *Tratado general*, 318.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Granados García, *Tratado general*, 322.

Vatican Council on the nature of the Church, but not as presented above. Joseph Ratzinger notes that although this model of the Church as a sacrament did not take hold in the consciousness of the faithful in contrast to the vision of the Church as the people of God or the Church-body, it is crucial for grasping the Council's vision.<sup>72</sup> The constitution *Lumen gentium* says that the Church in Christ "is like (*veluti*) a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (LG 1), and in point 48 adds that she is "the universal sacrament of salvation".

This notion of sacrament in relation to the Church appears in the Council's debate for the first time in March 1963 in the third consecutive schema of the Constitution on the Church, which was prepared by the Belgian theologian Gérard Philips. According to Ratzinger,<sup>73</sup> Philips took this expression from a draft by German theologians, which was much appreciated by the German bishops assembled in Münster on 28–30th December 1962. The difference between this German draft and the schema for the constitution prepared by the Louvain theologian seems to be small, yet significant. The German draft explicitly states that "the Church is the sacrament of the union of men between themselves and with God."<sup>74</sup> The Belgian draft is much more cautious here, since the term "sacrament" is clarified by the phrase "sign and instrument" and the term is introduced by adding the word *veluti*, "as it were." It seems that the author anticipated the surprise of many of the Council Fathers and their concern that many of the faithful would think that an eighth sacrament had just been introduced alongside baptism, the Eucharist or marriage. The point, however, is that the word "sacrament" is used here in a broader, biblical-patristic sense, referring to the mystery of unity, and not in the classical sense of suggesting that another

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, *Formalne zasady*, 54; Ratzinger, "Kościół jako sakrament zbawienia," 223–224.

<sup>73</sup> Ratzinger, "Kościół jako sakrament zbawienia," 222–223.

<sup>74</sup> *Constitutionis Dogmaticae*, 13: "Cum vero sese ut sacramentum unionis totius generis humani in se et cum Deo [...] cognoscat."

eighth sacrament has been introduced. This is why the document uses the cautious expression *veluti sacramentum*.

However, it should be noted here that *Lumen gentium* clearly states that the Church is a sacrament in relation to Christ, who is a sacrament in the highest degree. Therefore, Ratzinger notes that in arguing the validity of the use of the Church-sacrament model, reference was made, for example, to St Augustine, who wrote in one of his letters that “the sacrament of God is nothing and no one except Christ.” The German conciliar *peritus* added: “All the sacraments, that is, all the basic cultic acts of the Church, have a Christological structure: they are mediations of Him who is the visible Word of God and thus instituted the Christian sacrament in general.”<sup>75</sup>

However, there is no denying that this patristic understanding is enriched by elements of classical sacramentology through the use of the phrase “sign and instrument,” referring to the Tridentine theology of “the instrumental sign of grace, instituted for our justification.” Ratzinger observes that sacred signs, in order to happen, in order to perform something, need cultic action (they then become instruments of our salvation, of justification). Cultic action, on the other hand, needs, as the German cardinal adds, “a community in which it lives and which embodies the mandate for such action.”<sup>76</sup> Ultimately, the future Pope concludes: “We can therefore say that the seven sacraments are neither conceivable nor possible without this one sacrament, which is the Church. [...] The Church is a sacrament in the sacraments; the sacraments are the means of realising the sacramentality of the Church. The Church and the sacraments mutually explain each other.”<sup>77</sup>

In this sense, the Church is portrayed as a sacrament, that is, a sign and instrument for establishing communion with the Triune God and the faithful among themselves. This sacramental perspective of ecclesiology shows us that the Church is a sacrament – analogous to the incarnation of Christ (cf. *LG* 8) – in the sense that, while

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<sup>75</sup> Ratzinger, “Kościół jako sakrament zbawienia,” 225.

<sup>76</sup> Ratzinger, “Kościół jako sakrament zbawienia,” 226.

<sup>77</sup> Ratzinger, *Formalne zasady*, 58; Ratzinger, “Kościół jako sakrament zbawienia,” 227.

possessing its social organism as *signum visibile*, it at the same time effectively realises Christ's salvation. In it the visible and the invisible are united. Through the discovery of the sacramentality of the Church, the communal vision of Christianity and salvation also comes to light. Ratzinger summarises the doctrine of the sacramentality of the Church in three points, saying that the Church-sacrament model allows us to:

- a. Counter the individualistic understanding of the sacraments as means of grace, making it clear that the sacrament is always a communal process.
- b. Deepen the understanding of the Church, which is not an external organisation of faith but a community of worship, for it is most fully the Church when it celebrates the liturgy.
- c. Understand that *unitas* – unity with God is the content of grace, but the consequence of this union with God is also the unity of people among themselves.<sup>78</sup>

All that we have said above leads us to note that, in the theology of the Bavarian cardinal, the Church-sacrament model cannot be separated from the Church-communion and Church-body models, which are largely two models of so-called eucharistic ecclesiology. The Church-sacrament vision shows that the sacraments are the concrete realisation of what the Church is and that the Church is their minister by celebrating the liturgy. However, this perspective ignores the truth that the Church is born of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist,<sup>79</sup> according to Henri de Lubac's famous phrase: "The Eucharist makes the Church."<sup>80</sup> We can see this primacy of the Eucharist over the Church already in St Paul, who applies the concept of *mysterion* to the Church insofar as he sees her first as the Body of Christ (Eph 1:9, 22), which is born and built up by the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:16–17).<sup>81</sup>

Joseph Ratzinger notes that the theology of the Church as *communio* and of the Church as the Body of Christ is always and directly linked

<sup>78</sup> Ratzinger, "Kościół jako sakrament zbawienia," 229.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Granados García, *Tratado general*, 321.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. de Lubac, *Medytacja o Kościele*, 129.

<sup>81</sup> Granados García, *Tratado general*, 322.



to Eucharistic theology.<sup>82</sup> This is evidenced by the fact that virtually all the ancient terms for the Eucharist – such as *koinonia*, *agape*, *pax*, *communio* – are at the same time terms for the Church. Perhaps this is most clearly evidenced by speaking of the Church and the Eucharist as the Body of Christ, where – as Henri de Lubac pointed out in his monumental work – the adjectives “mystical” and “real” were applied in a different order in patristic and early medieval theology than they are today. The term “real Body” was used to refer to the Church, and the “mystical” to the Eucharist.<sup>83</sup> Ratzinger wrote significant words, related to this: “The Church is the celebration of the Eucharist, and the Eucharist is the Church. These two realities do not exist side by side, but are identified with one another. Everything else flows from this source. The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ, and since the Church is the Eucharist, she is the sacrament to which all the other sacraments are subordinated.”<sup>84</sup> The vision of Church-sacrament finds its natural complement in the concept of Church-body, since the Church is born of the sacraments, like fruit ripening on a tree, and at the same time offers on the altar the Body of Christ actualising in this way what she is, being a sign (sacrament) of communion with God and of men between themselves.<sup>85</sup> Without a doubt, the Church makes the sacraments and at the same time the sacraments make the Church.

Concluding these reflections on the sacramentality of the Church in Ratzinger, we can mention that here too we find the theologian from the Bavarian Marktl am Inn characteristically defining the sacrament as something that cannot be invented on my own or created by my own efforts, but must be accepted.<sup>86</sup> The Church, which lives in Eucharistic communities and which is born at the Last Supper and under the Lord’s cross, is not any organisation that can

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<sup>82</sup> A comprehensive presentation of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology in relation to the Church-body and Church-communion models is beyond the capacity of this study. Therefore, we can refer to such texts as: Ratzinger, “Eklezjologia Konstytucji,” 531–536; Ratzinger, “Eklezjologia II Soboru,” 239–242.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. de Lubac, *Corpus mysticum*. This issue was also referred to by Ratzinger: cf. Ratzinger, *Wykłady bawarskie*, 134; Ratzinger, “The Spirit of the Liturgy,” 53.

<sup>84</sup> Ratzinger, *Formalne zasady*, 65.

<sup>85</sup> Granados García, *Tratado general*, 322.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, “Eklezjologia II Soboru,” 241.

be constantly invented and improved according to worldly models. The future Pope writes: “The Church cannot be made for oneself, but can only be received, and received from where she is now and where she really is: from the sacramental community of His Body, proceeding through history.”<sup>87</sup>

## Conclusion

In the present paper we have tried to show how “sacramentality” is a central concept in Joseph Ratzinger’s theology. Without this concept, neither the theology of Revelation (Ratzinger’s habilitation), nor the theology of the word of God and its interpretation in the Church (one of the major themes of Benedict XVI’s pontificate and his book *Jesus of Nazareth*), nor his ecclesiology (Ratzinger’s doctorate) can be understood. Without the notion of sacramentality, it is also ultimately impossible to understand Ratzinger’s theology of liturgy, which is closely linked to the concept of *logikē latreía*, or Logos-modelled worship. The theme of “sacramentality” is so important that also in his last book, published posthumously, Benedict XVI draws attention to the issue of *sacramentum futuri* in terms of the interpretation of salvation history.<sup>88</sup> Ratzinger’s understanding of sacramentality, which we have presented in relation to the “sacramentality of creation,” the “sacramentality of the Word,” and the “sacramentality of the Church,” is entirely rooted in Christology, that is, it is born out of reference to the *Logos incarnatus*. We can, by way of conclusion, say that this sacramentality as Ratzinger understands it is characterised by three dimensions:

Sacramentality always refers us to a reality which is given to us and which we cannot invent or work out by our own efforts.

Sacramentality refers us to the reality of the sign, that is, that which takes us further, which sends us beyond itself, which refers us to the future (*sacramentum futuri*) on the principle of being a figure, a type of the Coming Lord.

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<sup>87</sup> Ratzinger, “Eklezjologia II Soboru,” 242.

<sup>88</sup> Benedict XVI, “Łaska i powołanie,” 79.

Sacramentality delivers us from the double anthropological error in which modern man is stuck, namely materialism and idealism, which see in man either only a material, biological element, material for human work, or, on the other hand, a pure spirit which, in its encounter with God, seems to need no mediation of sign or matter.

This allows us to say that, for Joseph Ratzinger, all sacramental reality means simply that, because of the incarnation of the divine Word, every encounter between man and God can only take place in a human way, that is, in human relationships, in corporeality and historicity. This also means that “he, as a man, cannot personally control when and how and where God has to manifest himself to him, that he is, on the contrary, the one receiving, the one dependent on the fullness of power that is simply given and not to be produced on his own authority. That power is the sign of the sovereign freedom of God, who himself determines the mode of his presence.”<sup>89</sup>

### **Sakramentalność w ujęciu Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI**

**Abstrakt:** Artykuł stara się pokazać, że pojęcie sakramentalności jest jednym z kluczowych dla uchwycenia całościowej wizji teologii Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI. U niemieckiego teologa pojęcie to nie jest odnoszone jedynie do siedmiu sakramentalnych znaków łaski, ale służy do interpretacji Bożego Objawienia w historii zbawienia (i stworzenia), katolickiej interpretacji Pisma Świętego, wnikania w tajemnicę Kościoła i celebrowanej liturgii. Dlatego też w artykule podjęty został temat sakramentalności w jej fundamentalnym znaczeniu, aby pokazać, że to, co materialne, objawia to, co duchowe, że przeszłość wskazuje na przyszłość według modelu „obietnica–wypełnienie”. Sakramentalność – według Ratzingera – odnosi się również do tego, czego człowiek nie może wyprodukować własnymi siłami, ale musi to przyjąć jako dar od Boga. W tych znaczeniach omawiana jest sakramentalność stworzenia, słowa i Kościoła w ujęciu bawarskiego kardynała i późniejszego papieża.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Joseph Ratzinger, Benedykt XVI, interpretacja Pisma Świętego, Kościół, liturgia, sakramentalność

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<sup>89</sup> Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation,” 167.

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