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Fundamentals of the presence of clergy in the media. Theological and canonical aspect

Podstawy obecności duchownych w mediach. Aspekt teologiczny i kanoniczny

Abstract

The Church carries out Christ's command to preach the Gospel also through the social media. This was pointed out in more recent times by the Second Vatican Council, which in its decree *Inter mirifica*, advocated the use of these tools. At the present time, the internet has also become an important space for the preaching of the word of God. The presence of clergy on social media seems necessary. Of course, it has its glows and shadows. Therefore, there is no shortage of indications in the Church's theological reflection and post-conciliar legislation to structure the ministry of clergy in the media in such a way that it becomes a modern pulpit and serves the effective preaching of the word of God.

Keywords

means of social communication, preaching the word of God, the teaching function of the Church, social media, clergy

Abstrakt

Kościół realizuje Chrystusowy nakaz głoszenia Ewangelii także poprzez środki społecznego przekazu. Zwrócił na to uwagę w czasach najnowszych Sobór Watykański II, który w dekreście *Inter mirifica*, postulował korzystanie z tych narzędzi. W obecnym czasie ważną przestrzenią przepowiadania słowa Bożego stał się również internet. Obecność duchownych w mediach społecznościowych wydaje się być konieczna. Ma ona oczywiście swoje blaski i cienie. Dlatego w refleksji teologicznej i ustawodawstwie posoborowym Kościoła nie brakuje wskazań, które posługę duchownych w mediach mają uporządkować w taki sposób, aby stała się ona nowoczesną amboną i służyła skutecznemu przepowiadaniu słowa Bożego.

Słowa kluczowe

środki społecznego przekazu, przepowiadanie słowa Bożego, nauczycielskie zadanie Kościoła, media społecznościowe, duchowni

St. John Paul II, in his Message for the 36th World Communications Day on 24th January 2002, noted that the Church approached the new means of interpersonal communication, the Internet, with realism and trust. For Catholic Christians, it is primarily a means, not an end in itself. It can create perfect environment for conducting evangelisation. *It is important, therefore, that the Christian community think of very practical ways of helping those who first make contact through the Internet to move from the virtual world of cyberspace to the real world of Christian community. At a subsequent stage, the Internet can also provide the kind of follow-up which evangelization requires. Especially in an unsupportive culture, Christian living calls for continuing instruction and catechesis, and this is perhaps the area in which the Internet can provide excellent help*¹.

This study – intended as a general introduction to the subject – aims to recall the theological and canonical foundations relating to the presence of clergy in new means of social communication. It shows the evolution of guidelines and regulations that correlate with Lords's first indication to go and proclaim the *Gospel to every creature* (Mark 16:15).

1. Evangelism as a biblical command of Christ

After his resurrection, Jesus Christ gave his last command to his disciples: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you* (Matthew 28:19-20). On the other hand, the author of the Acts of the Apostles recalled the instructions given to the Lord Jesus' closest companions during one of the meals: *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth* (Acts 1: 8). The Church has made good use of these biblical foundations, because since the beginning of its history – as A. Lewek emphasised – it has tried to evangelise in various available ways and means of interpersonal communication. At first, the Gospel was preached orally, but over time it took on a written form. In addition, the Church evangelised its faithful with the testimony of Christian life, conducted charitable activities, and performed public worship of God. In connection with the latter, church singing was developed, images were created and religious symbols were shaped. When historical circumstances became favorable, evangelisation was carried out through church buildings, and especially through their interiors. It was then that the development of polychromes with biblical themes, known as *Biblia pauperum*, took place. Mysteries and theater performances on religious themes were introduced as part of parish pastoral work and generally understood Christian formation. The breakthrough event in the work of preaching the Gospel was undoubtedly the invention of printing, which meant that the content of the Holy Bible – starting with

¹ John Paul II, *Message of the Holy Father John Paul II for the 36th World Communications Day* (24.01.2002), no. 3, in: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20020122_world-communications-day.html (access 28.05.2023).

John Gutenberg's Bible of 1455 – could reach an increasingly large group of recipients. Until the twentieth century, it was primarily the spoken and printed word that was the primary means of transmitting the teachings of Christ *to every creature* (Mark 16:15)².

However, recent times – the past and the present century – have brought an incredible development of other forms and techniques of social communication. They did not remain indifferent to the evangelising activity of the Church. Large-circulation press, film, radio and television were an impulse to firstly appreciate them within the Church and then to notice the need to adapt the means and forms of preaching religious content to the mentality and perceptive capabilities of the recipients³. As M. Sokołowski noted, *it was not about changing the content of the message, but about the ways of communicating it, about inventing new forms of reaching contemporary people with the revelation, who today are not people from the times of the first Christians, nor from the Middle Ages or the Enlightenment, but beings whose personality, education, ethical attitude and interests were shaped by the technical civilisation of the twentieth century*⁴.

2. Decree *Inter Mirifica*

The Second Vatican Council, which in many dimensions seemed to be a special passage of the Holy Spirit through the Church (SC 43), undoubtedly focused on *aggiornamento*, thus emphasising that theology should invariably be based, *on the written word of God, together with sacred tradition, as its primary and perpetual foundation* (DV 24). And this Sacred Scripture is still the essential foundation for the ministry of the word, which is to be manifested not only in preaching and catechesis, but also in all other Christian teaching. This kind of thinking was taken up in the Decree on the Media of Social Communication *Inter mirifica* adopted by the Second Vatican Council on 4th December 1963. It draws attention to the awareness of the Church, which in the new historical and social reality realises that it has been obliged by Christ *to preach the Gospel, considers it one of its duties to announce the Good News of salvation also with the help of the media of social communication and to instruct men in their proper use* (IM 3)⁵.

The *Inter mirifica* decree turned out to be not only a programmatic document, but also in a sense even prophetic, if you look at the development of the media and their growing importance in the following decades. Moreover, its fundamental nature for

² A. Lewek, *Mass-media w służbie ewangelizacji*, "Studia Theologica Varsaviensia" 36 (1998), no. 2, pp. 90-91.

³ A. Lewek, art. cit. p. 91; P. Machalski, *Kościół rzymskokatolicki a media: aspekt doktrynalny, prawny i praktyka relacji*, "Warmińsko-Mazurski Kwartalnik Naukowy, Nauki Społeczne" 12 (2014), no. 4, p. 37.

⁴ M. Sokołowski, *Kultura, media, komunikacja wiary: wybrane problemy aksjologii w społeczeństwie informacyjnym*, Olsztyn 2007, p. 166.

⁵ A. Kondratowicz, *Normy dotyczące występowania duchownych i głoszenia nauki Kościoła w środkach masowego przekazu*, "Kortowski Przegląd Prawniczy" 11 (2017), pp. 7-8; W. Misztal, *Środki społecznego przekazu jako narzędzie ewangelizacji: preewangelizacja, postewangelizacja*, in: *Inter mirifica. Dziedzictwo i perspektywy. Tom jubileuszowy w 50. Rocznicę ogłoszenia soborowego Dekretu o środkach społecznego przekazywania myśli*, A. Baczyński, M. Drożdż, M. Legan (ed.), Kraków 2013, p. 57.

the analysed issue may be proven by the fact that it is one of the first chronologically documents adopted by the Second Vatican Council. The form in which *Inter mirifica* was issued is also noteworthy. It is not, for understandable reasons, a constitution, but it is also not just a declaration. The cited document was issued in the form of a decree, which further demonstrates the importance of the means of social communication in the work of evangelisation, of which the participants of the council's deliberations were already aware at that time⁶. In *Inter mirifica* – as E. Górecki noted – the Church positively referred to discoveries in the field of methods of communication, whose task is to convey human thoughts and messages⁷. The Church has found its ally in the mass media in fulfilling the mission received from Christ *to make disciples of all nations* (Matthew 28:19). It is modern means of communication that allow us to reach people all over the world, thanks to which Christ's last command can be implemented even more effectively⁸. Therefore – as the analysed document shows – it is necessary for pastors who preach the Gospel in the media to have appropriate education and to acquire the necessary formation to use the means of social communication (IM 15-16)⁹.

3. Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio*

After the *Inter Mirifica* decree, the pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio* was issued. It was published on 23rd May 1971 by the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications. This document, in the opinion of commentators, can be considered a kind of *magna carta* of the Church's current approach to mass media. The instruction – although issued seven years after the Second Vatican Council – is *de facto* part of the council's teaching, as its publication was announced in *Inter mirifica* (IM 23), and is therefore considered an official interpretation of the views of the Holy See with regard to the means of social communication¹⁰.

In *Communio et progressio*, it was emphasized that the means of social communication are aimed at creating a greater sense of community between people and at cooperating more effectively¹¹. In a similar way, the Church – using these media – is to effectively

⁶ A. Baczyński, *Telewizja a świat wartości*, Kraków 2003, p. 75; W. Misztal, *Środki społecznego przekazu...*, in: *Inter mirifica...*, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

⁷ A more widely analyzed issue is discussed by: E. Górecki, *Prawo i obowiązek Kościoła do korzystania ze środków społecznego przekazu w przygotowaniu kandydatów do kapłaństwa*, in: *Przesłanie chrześcijańskie a mass media. Aspekty prawnokanoniczne*, A. Kaczor (ed.), Lublin 2000, pp. 19-29.

⁸ A. Kondratowicz, art. cit., pp. 7-8.

⁹ A. Domaszek, *Formacja alumnów wyższych seminariów duchownych do korzystania ze środków społecznego przekazu w misji Kościoła*, "Prawo Kanoniczne" 51 (2008), no. 3-4, p. 92.

¹⁰ R. Kamiński, *Reforma papieskich instytucji do spraw komunikacji społecznej*, "Prawo Kanoniczne" 60 (2017), no. 2, pp. 39-40; A. Kondratowicz, art. cit. p. 8.

¹¹ Pontificium Consilium Instrumentis Communicationis Socialis Praepositum, *Instructio pastoralis Communio et progressio* ad Decretum Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II de Instrumentis Communicationis Socialis rite applicandum de mandato eiusdem Concilii exarata (23.05.1971), no. 8, AAS 63 (1971), p. 596; A. Kondratowicz, art. cit., p. 8.

conduct a dialogue with the world. This task has been entrusted not only to journalists, but above all to clergy, who should always be perceived as carrying out a special type of pastoral service¹². Therefore, the presence of clergy of all levels in the media is highly advisable, with the provision that since they are representatives of the Church, they should be properly prepared for this type of speeches¹³.

4. Decree *De Ecclesiae pastorum vigilantia circa libros*

At this point, it is impossible to omit the decree of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *De Ecclesiae pastorum vigilantia circa libros* of 19th March 1975, which, although for obvious reasons, does not provide for the presence of clergy in community media – because this space did not exist at that time – it sets, however, general guidelines for the ministry of transmitting Christian doctrine in publications. It is the shepherds of the Church who have been entrusted with the work of proclaiming the Gospel to the whole world (LG 23), which is why they themselves should first of all strive to ensure that the transmission of the Christian faith is consistent with what has been revealed by God.

In this way, it was emphasized in the conciliar constitution *Dei verbum* that everything that God in immeasurable kindness passed on in the form of revelation should be forever undiminished and passed on to all generations (DV 7). Caring for the authentic message of the Gospel is a task for the whole Church. In this mission, there are also to be found lay faithful who should cooperate with the shepherds of the Church, not only in the issue of transmitting the appropriate content of the faith, but also in responding to the falsified message. The relevant bishops, in accordance with the norms set out in the abovementioned decree, were obliged to ensure compliance with the procedure related to the publication in question¹⁴.

5. Code of Canon Law

The legislator did not omit the important issue of the transmission of God's word in the media space in the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*. Although these norms – though relatively little time has passed – now seem quite archaic, they are a confirmation of the conciliar *aggiornamento*. For the Church *has the duty and innate right, independent of any human power whatsoever, to preach the gospel to all peoples, also using the means of social*

¹² Pontificium Consilium Instrumentis Communicationis Socialis Praepositum, *Instructio pastoralis Communio et progressio...* (23.05.1971), no. 114-115, AAS 63 (1971), p. 634; K. Pokorna-Ignatowicz, *Instrukcja duszpasterska Communio et Progressio o środkach społecznego przekazu. Refleksje w trzydziestą rocznicę jej przyjęcia*, "Zeszyty Prasoznawcze" 43 (2000), no. 3-4, p. 167; A. Domaszek, art. cit., p. 93.

¹³ Pontificium Consilium Instrumentis Communicationis Socialis Praepositum, *Instructio pastoralis Communio et progressio...* (23.05.1971), no. 106, AAS 63 (1971), p. 634; K. Pokorna-Ignatowicz, art. cit., p. 166; A. Domaszek, art. cit., p. 93.

¹⁴ Sacra Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, *Decretum de Ecclesiae pastorum vigilantia circa libros*, AAS 67 (1975), pp. 281-282; W. Góralski, *Nauczycielskie zadanie Kościoła*, in: *Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego*, P. Hemperek, W. Góralski, F. Przytuła, J. Bakalarz (ed.), vol. III, Lublin 1986, pp. 44-45.

communication proper to it (can. 747 § 1 CIC)¹⁵. Worth noting here is the comment of W. Góralski to the introductory canons *de munere docendi*, resulting from the analysis of the conciliar constitution *Dei verbum*, that the Magisterium of the Church is called to faithful transmission and interpretation of the deposit of faith. Therefore, it cannot be above God's word, but it has to serve him, teaching only this what has been handed down in Revelation (DV 10). This remark seems to be quite important in the context of the contemporary presence of clergy on social media¹⁶.

In the norms relating to the forms of preaching the word of God, the code legislator pointed out that parish priests should look for means adapted to the needs of the faithful (can. 770 CIC). The 1983 *Code of Canon Law* refers to missionary activity in a broad sense. The preaching is to be carried out towards those who use it in ordinary conditions, as well as towards those who do not have such an opportunity (can. 771 § 1 CIC). Similarly, catechetical teaching should be carried out using all supporting means, teaching aids and means of social communication that seem to be as effective as possible to achieve the intended goal (can. 779 CIC). In addition, all pastors, especially bishops and parish priests, are to take care that the message of the Gospel also reaches non-believers living in their territory (can. 771 § 2 CIC). Therefore, the legislator stated that the teaching of Christian doctrine can also be carried out by radio and television, and he left detailed arrangements in this matter to the competent episcopal conferences (can. 772 § 2 CIC)¹⁷.

The participation of clergy in the means of social communication is referred to in Title IV of Book III of the *Code of Canon Law*. The legislator pointed out that *the pastors of the Church (...) in fulfilling their function, are to endeavor to make use of the instruments of social communication* (can. 822 § 1 CIC). The cited standard should be analyzed together with can. 831 § 1-2 CIC, which refers to the participation of clergy on radio or television in dealing with questions of Catholic doctrine or morals (can. 831 § 2 CIC). However, the media space – as noted by J. Adamczyk – must be viewed with realism, and therefore its advantages as well as the dangers to the integrity of faith and customs must be noted. The latter may result – life experience shows that this is the case – from the irresponsible use of the means of social communication. Therefore, the code legislator imposes on the pastors of the Church the obligation to ensure that the faith and customs of the faithful are not harmed by the use of the means of social communication (can. 823 § 1 CIC)¹⁸. Therefore, the pastors of the Church have the duty not only to instruct the faithful so that

¹⁵ T. Pawluk, *Prawo kanoniczne według Kodeksu Jana Pawła II. Lud Boży, jego nauczanie i uświęcania*, vol. II, Olsztyn 2002, p. 296; E. Górecki, *Prawo i obowiązki Kościoła...*, in: *Przesłanie chrześcijańskie a mass media...*, op. cit., p. 23; A. Kondratowicz, art. cit., p. 8.

¹⁶ W. Góralski, *Nauczycielskie zadanie Kościoła*, in: *Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanoniczne*, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

¹⁷ T. Pawluk, op. cit., pp. 299-301; W. Góralski, *Nauczycielskie zadanie Kościoła*, in: *Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanoniczne*, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

¹⁸ J. Adamczyk, *Uwagi na temat „Norm Konferencji Episkopatu Polski dotyczących występowania duchownych i osób zakonnych oraz przekazywania nauki chrześcijańskiej w audycjach radiowych i telewizyjnych*, „Prawo Kanoniczne” 51 (2008), no. 1-2, p. 140.

the application of the measures in question is animated by the human and Christian spirit, but also to take this into account themselves when they appear in the media. The task of holy shepherds is therefore justified interference, which aims to care for the purity of Catholic doctrine in widely understood media publications¹⁹.

6. Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis novae*

Pontifical Commission for Social Communications, referred to in the context of the Instruction *Communio et Progressio*, has been transformed into the now-defunct Pontifical Council for Social Communications²⁰. This was done on the basis of the apostolic constitution *Pastor bonus* of 28th June 1988. Under this document – reforming the work of the Roman Curia – it was decided that the new office would remain in close connection with the Secretariat of State, *to encourage and support in a timely and suitable way the action of the Church and her members in the many forms of social communication*²¹. Currently, these tasks – in accordance with the constitution *the Praedicate Evangelium* on the Roman Curia and its service to the Church in the world of 19th March 2022 – have been undertaken by the Dicastery for Communication. Its task *is to ensure that the faithful become increasingly aware of their own responsibility to commit themselves to the task of making the multiple means of communication available to the Church's pastoral mission, in service to the growth of civilization and morality*²².

The above-mentioned Pontifical Council for Social Communications – in the pursuit of its statutory tasks – issued a pastoral instruction on social transmission *Aetatis novae* on 22nd February 1992. In this document, published on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of *Communio et progressio*, it was repeated that for the Church, too, the media appear as a way to community. They should serve in the holistic development of each person, encompassing *the cultural, transcendent and religious dimensions of man and society*²³. The media are also to remain at the service of the community of the Church,

¹⁹ J.M. Gonzalez del Valle, *Commentary on can. 822*, in: Kodeks prawa kanonicznego. Komentarz, P. Majer (Polish ed.), Kraków 2011, pp. 629-630; W. Góralski, *Nauczycielskie zadanie Kościoła*, in: Komentarz do Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

²⁰ Pontifical Council for Social Communications under the reform undertaken on the initiative of Pope Francis was absorbed by the created on 27th June 2015 Secretariat for Communication. See. R. Kamiński, art. cit., p. 45.

²¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor bonus* on the Roman Curia (28.06.1988), art. 169-170, in: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_19880628_pastor-bonus.html (access 28.05.2023); R. Kamiński, art. cit., p. 42.

²² Francis, Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* on the Roman Curia and its service to the Church in the world (19.03.2022), art. 186, in: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/20220319-costituzione-ap-praedicate-evangelium.html (access 28.05.2023).

²³ Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus, Pastoral instruction *Aetatis novae* on social communications on the twentieth anniversary of *Communio et progressio* (22.02.1992), no. 7, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_22021992_aetatis_en.html (access 28.05.2023).

carrying out the work of the new evangelization. According to the analyzed document, *along with traditional means such as witness of life, catechetics, personal contact, popular piety, the liturgy and similar celebrations, the use of media is now essential in evangelization and catechesis*²⁴. Nevertheless, for this to be possible, both education and practical training in the field of social communication seem to be necessary and should be an integral part of the formation of all pastors and priests²⁵.

7. Documents updating the code standards.

The growth of the internet and social media has forced the publication of documents that update code standards. Noteworthy is the *Instruction on some aspects of the use of the instruments of social communication in promoting the doctrine of the faith* published on 30th March 1992 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which states *that the social communications media surely have to be counted among the most effective instruments available today for spreading the message of the Gospel*²⁶. However, due to the difficulties involved in undertaking the proclamation of the Gospel in the media space, it is necessary to issue appropriate regulations, normalizing the Church's presence in the media. This requires care and vigilance on the part of the competent ecclesiastical authority. It is above all the bishops, shepherds, who have the right and the duty to ensure that no harm is done, either to the faith or to the faithful, either by writings or by the media. To the holy shepherds there is therefore a duty to evaluate – even before publication – the writings on faith and morals, which for this purpose must first be submitted to them by the faithful²⁷. For this reason, the indications given in the aforementioned instruction *guarantee the freedom of all: whether it be the individual Christian faithful who have a right to receive the Gospel message in all its integrity and purity or those engaged in pastoral work, theologians, and all Catholics engaged in journalism who have the right to communicate their thought while maintaining the integrity of the faith and the Church's teaching on morals and due respect for the Bishops*²⁸.

²⁴ Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus, Pastoral instruction *Aetatis novae...* (22.02.1992), no. 10-11, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_22021992_aetatis_en.html (access 28.05.2023); E. Górecki, *Prawo i obowiązek Kościoła...*, in: *Przesłanie chrześcijańskie a mass media...*, op. cit., p. 22; A. Kondratowicz, art. cit., p. 8; A. Domaszczak, art. cit., p. 93.

²⁵ Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus, Pastoral instruction *Aetatis novae...* (22.02.1992), no. 18, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_22021992_aetatis_en.html (access 28.05.2023); A. Domaszczak, art. cit., pp. 93-94.

²⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on some aspects of the use of the instruments of social communication in promoting the doctrine of the faith* (30.03.1992), in: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19920330_istruzione-pccs_en.html (access 28.05.2023);

²⁷ A. Kondratowicz, art. cit., p. 9.

²⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on some aspects of the use of the instruments of social communication in promoting the doctrine of the faith* (30.03.1992), in: <https://www.vatican.va/ro>

In addition to the above instruction, reference can also be made to the document of the now defunct Pontifical Council for the Social Communications entitled *The Church and the Internet* of 22nd February 2002. Its content relates to the implications of the internet in the field of religion, and in particular in relation to the Catholic Church. In turn, in another document *Ethics on the Internet*, published on the same day by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications were raised the issues of the ethical dimension of this means of social communication²⁹.

Indeed, the Church's proper participation in the media space – as is evident from the above documents – is fundamental to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel. This was pointed out by St. John Paul II in the apostolic letter *Il rapido sviluppo* of 24th January 2005, when he stated that the Church is called to *integrate the message of salvation into the "new culture" that these powerful means of communication create and amplify. It tells us that the use of the techniques and the technologies of contemporary communications is an integral part of its mission in the third millennium*³⁰. And Benedict XVI – referring to the ministry undertaken in the media – pointed out that it is *both a direct form of evangelization and as a contribution to the promotion of all that is good and true for every human society*³¹. For this reason, according to this Pope, apostolate at the level of the media should be linked, moreover, to the witness of Christian life; it is to bring the voice and arguments of Christ into the forum of the social media and to build bridges of understanding between the Church and public opinion³². Pope Francis also sees the good that can flow from the media space. Already at the beginning of his pontificate, in an address to the participants of the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, he pointed out that what had hitherto been merely a tool of communication was becoming a space of life. Therefore, it cannot lack a place for dialogue and the proclamation of the Gospel. However, in order for this evangelizing mission to be properly fulfilled, proper formation is needed. One must beware, as

man_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19920330_istruzione-pccs_en.html (access 28.05.2023); J.M. Gonzalez del Valle, *Commentary on can. 823*, in: Kodeks prawa kanonicznego, op. cit., pp. 630-631.

²⁹ J.M. Gonzalez del Valle, *Commentary on can. 822*, in: Kodeks prawa kanonicznego, op. cit., p. 630.

³⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic letter *The rapid development* to those responsible for communications (24.01.2005), no. 2, in: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20050124_il-rapido-sviluppo.html (access 28.05.2023); J.M. Gonzalez del Valle, *Commentary on can. 822*, in: Kodeks prawa kanonicznego, op. cit., p. 630.

³¹ Benedict XVI, *Address to the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications* (17.03.2006), in: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060317_pccs.html (access 28.05.2023); A. Domasz, art. cit., p. 94.

³² Benedict XVI, *Address to the media of the Italian Bishops' Conference* (02.06.2006), in: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/june/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_2006_0602_media-cei.html (access 28.05.2023); A. Domasz, art. cit., p. 94.

the Pope noted, of “manipulate the mind” and “theological brainwashing”, but lead the other person to an encounter with the living person of Jesus Christ³³.

Conclusions

The command of Jesus Christ, expressed in the words: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you* (Matthew 28, 19-20), the Church implements through the proclamation of the Gospel. At the beginning, it was done by oral transmission, then it took the written form. Today, the preaching of the word of God is also carried out through the means of social communication. The Second Vatican Council encouraged all followers of Christ to proclaim the Gospel in the media in the decree *Inter mirifica*. It postulated that – in carrying out this important task – the proper use of the mass media to be taken care of. This last thought was developed in the pastoral instruction *Communio et progressio*, which was a kind of complement to the conciliar decree. It also points out that the presence of clergy in the media is most welcome, but that when they undertake to preach the Gospel in this space, they should be properly prepared for this type of activity.

The communication of the word of God in the means of communication has also become the focus of the ecclesiastical legislator in *Code of Canon Law*. However, the galloping progress of technology has made the 1983 norms seem rather archaic nowadays, and therefore, within the framework of the postulates *de lege ferenda*, it seems right to propose either their updating through a relevant document or a thorough revision of Book III of the Code – *on the teaching function of the Church* – with the introduction of new canons into its content.

The codex legislator, in the norms relating to the forms of preaching the Word of God, has pointed out that the pastors of the Church should, in this matter, seek measures that take into account the needs of the faithful (can. 770 CIC). In addition, they are also *to make provision that the message of the Gospel reaches non-believers living in the territory* (can. 771 § 2 CIC). Therefore, the teaching of Christian doctrine can be done through the proper use of social media. However, care must be taken to ensure that the clergy's participation in this work is done at an appropriate level, that is, in such a way as to preserve the integrity of faith and morals.

³³ Francis, *Address to the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications* (21.09.2013), in: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/september/documents/papa-francesco_20130921_plenaria-pccs.html (access 28.05.2023); P. Wajs, *Papież Franciszek a media społecznościowe – zarys problematyki*, in: *Mosty, nie mury. 5 lat pontyfikatu Franciszka*, M. Lis (ed.), Opole 2018, p. 120.

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