

INTRODUCTION

This is the 50th issue of „Warsaw Pastoral Studies” now available to our Readers. It is since 2005 that we have been with you, consistently endeavouring to reflect on pastoral theology in its broadest sense, and to provide inspiration for the evangelizing mission of the Church. Our articles are published by both independent academics and doctoral students who strive for their scientific degrees. In this way, we wish to implement effectively the teaching of John Paul II, who, when defining pastoral theology, writes in the exhortation *Pastores dabо vobis* that *it is a scientific reflection on the Church as she is built up daily, by the power of the Spirit, in history; on the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation, as a living sign and instrument of the salvation wrought by Christ through the word, the sacraments and the service of charity* (PVD 57). He points out that *pastoral theology is not just an art. Nor is it a set of exhortations, experiences and methods. It is theological in its own right, because it receives from the faith the principles and criteria for the pastoral action of the Church in history (...)*. He also notes that *among these principles and criteria, one that is specially important is that of the evangelical discernment of the socio-cultural and ecclesial situation in which the particular pastoral action has to be carried out* (ibid).

On the one hand, on our pages one can find issues which have a universal, general, and timeless dimension, on the other hand, we would like to provide tools which help to make evangelical discernment here and now. Since we are present on the UKSW Open Journal Platform, we would like to share our theological and pastoral reflection with a wider audience and celebrate our jubilee by publishing an English-language issue, which contains selected articles published in previous issues of our scientific journal.

The issue opens with an article by Prof. Kamiński, a doyen of Polish pastoral theologians, on the place of pastoral theology in the system of sciences. An unquestionable scientific authority, who has educated many Polish pastoral theologians, is a solid guarantee for a good understanding of the essence, object, and tasks of pastoral theology,

indicating, among others, the search for an answer to the question concerning the faithfulness to the mission of the Church founded by Christ. Fr. Kamiński, emphasizing that the Church undertakes scientific reflection on the actualization of her essence in specific conditions of place and time, needs to refer to Divine Revelation and theological sciences on the one hand, and ecclesiology, and on the other hand to a particular situation, examining it with sociological, psychological methods, etc. The author states that effective ecclesial activity presupposes knowledge of the complex, changing social, psychological, religious-pastoral, and historical realities, which, when confronted with the indications of Revelation and the teachings of the Magisterium, will make it possible to formulate conclusions and pastoral guidelines.

Prof. Przybyłowski discusses the issue of planning the pastoral activity of the Church. He underlines the importance of pastoral planning and notes that it should take into account the evangelical realism, connected with the awareness, that the manifestations of the ecclesial mission are an „investment for the future.” He notes that although pastoral activity is planned for „today and tomorrow,” the effects of actions remain a matter of a closer or longer time perspective of the Church’s existence and the life of each of its members. The author believes that the basic principle of planned pastoral activity should be the distribution of responsibility among the entities involved in the implementation of specific tasks and the inclusion of as many people as possible to carry it out, as well as the appreciation of diagnostic studies, created with the participation of specialists in the humanities (especially sociologists and psychologists) and pastoral theologians.

Tutak, PhD, addresses the question of the identity of the laity, referring to both the post-synodal exhortation *Christifideles laici* and the social sciences. Noting that the exhortation is dedicated to the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and the world, he emphasizes the difference of their vocation from that of clergy and religious, calling them to sacralise the world they live in. He also refers to the indications of social theory stressing that the awareness of their own identity will allow them to perceive their difference

from other states, leading them to get involved in the pastoral mission of the Church, which is particularly important in the context of pastoral conversion.

The question of the role of the laity in missionary pastoral ministry, which is to result from pastoral conversion, is raised by Fr. Wielebski. With reference to Pope Francis' teaching, especially that contained in the exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, he shows the essence of missionary pastoral ministry, which *seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: We have always done it this way* (EG 33). As part of the Church's primary purpose of existence, which is evangelisation, it must also be exercised by properly formed lay people. As both Christ's disciples and his missionaries, they are called to give daily witness to their faith, at the same time undertaking many evangelising activities.

The issue closes with scientific reflections of Fr. Sadlak on the crisis of marriage and family in the context of challenges for adult pastoral ministry. On the one hand, he presents the theological foundations of marriage and family and an outline of a diagnosis of crisis phenomena affecting them, and on the other hand, he presents proposals of pastoral actions. The author postulates, among other things, paying more attention to the pastoral care of engaged couples and more effective pre-marriage courses in parishes, as well as, referring to the American pastoral solutions, preparing videos on marriage, its theology and meaning, while informing about formal and organisational issues of a wedding ceremony or a Catholic wedding. He also underlines, following Pope Francis, the need for pastoral accompaniment of couples and families, especially in the context of strengthening bonds and obtaining educational competence, as well as of divorced persons and those whose spouse passes away (AL 296).

I hope that the contents of this issue of „Warsaw Pastoral Studies” will *serve as a leaven* for undertaking various pastoral activities. And I would like to encourage other authors to publish their articles on our pages.

On behalf of the Editorial Board
Rev. Tomasz Wielebski