

THE POST-MODERN MAN AND THE LITURGY

Habilitation Thesis

Assoc. prof. dr. Dávid Diósi

Abstract

I submit the following thesis to the kind attention of the members of the Theological Committee of the National Council for Attesting Titles, Diplomas and Certificates. The habilitation thesis presents the results of my researches made following my promotion as an assoc. professor related to the postmodern man and the liturgy.

During my teaching career I have frequently come face to face with the conception of the modern man. That induced me to scrutinize our age and the man who live in today's world.

While I was becoming absorbed more and more in that study I noticed that no studies are done about the association of man in our age to the liturgy. There are some people who interpret, explain and analyse our postmodern age trying to understand it and others who venture to discuss in detail the important themes and subject-matters of liturgy-theology but don't take frequently into consideration the mutual effect between the two. I however interpret the liturgy as the place where God meets men of all age that is to say our contemporaries and forms a connection with them. It is understood that such a sacramental meeting is not "automatic", "mechanical" but a process touching on the physical and the spiritual world of men in every age. Let's not forget, every man has been born into his age. He has to work for his salvation and receive mercy in that particular historical age.

We all feel that during the last decades a change occurred in the world. A baffling, incomprehensible "stormy wind" permeates our society as well as our Church. Nothing is in its proper and usual place. Everything has moved, started on its way. There is nothing to go on in our society, we feel uncertainty suddenly everywhere and the conforming knowledge of being at home is gone.

It is fashionable today to talk of crisis. I think, however, we don't have to be afraid of crisis but rather welcome it. There is life behind it, vitality of the man in our age who is looking for something. Let's remember also that crisis as such always accompanies a process of crystallization. It is inseparable from the latter. It is unambiguous that after a crisis-typhoon everything is razed to the ground, that is to say, nothing remains as it was. The Church is going to play an important role how the devastated land will eventually look.

Our postmodern age then challenges the Church enormously. One of the reasons that the balance of power in our age has turned round completely. Today it is not the individual who has to prove to the Church that he is following the true faith. The reverse is the case: the Church has to prove its orthodoxy with the most trivial, existentialist arguments. And on top of it, the Church has to do so not only as standing in a principled position but in the monotonous daily routine.

The liturgy can also learn from the manifestations of the postmodern society, from its aesthetic-hunger. The Church has to understand that it cannot show itself today only through the prism of dogmatics and morality. This is repulsive for the man living in the postmodern world. There is another reason. This mode of expression with its double alternative is very one-sided and it might mislead today's man that Christianity is nothing else but a stimulus to think and to act. In the liturgy beside talking dogmatics of the faith one has to lay more stress on the aesthetics of the faith. This is a dimension where faith is mediated not only through speaking and listening but also through all the senses. Faith has to move not only the brain but has to call forth vibration of the soul as well.

Religiousness of today's man has two characteristics: searching for meaning through individual ways and lay stress upon the importance of personal experiences. If you think about it you will see that the people are looking for something which could be also found within the Church itself and not strange for the liturgy either.

That is to say that a liturgical event is a delightful-experience. Of course it is not a kind of happening which gives you a superficial experience. The liturgy happens to be such an event which challenges the individual. It opens up new vistas where we can fulfil our existence. That vista is not only an utopia, not a deceptive mirage but the shortest and the most straight road to ourselves.

The liturgy is supposed to bring into existence the experience when Man meets the Saint. On the field of a liturgical event man suddenly realizes that his life is an integral part of the history of salvation. The liturgical event happens to be an intellectual event as well helping to understand our life. Thus the liturgical and intellectual events complement each other. The liturgy is an oasis for everybody who is constantly looking for intelligence and understanding and since its effectiveness comes from Logos itself, the Creative Intelligence. It is the basis and the reason of all existence.