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THE ROLE OF MARY IN THE LIFE OF A PRIEST

The teaching of the Church depicts the relationship of Mary with life and ministry of priests. A constant reminder of this connection is confirmed by such content as:

- In the document of the Second Vatican Council on preparing for the sacrament of Holy Orders it is stated: „They should love and venerate with a filial trust the most blessed Virgin Mary, who was given as mother to the disciple by Christ Jesus as He was dying on the cross” (OT 8).
- John Paul II, while teaching on a priestly formation, pointed: „And so we priests are called to have an ever firmer and more tender devotion to the Virgin Mary and to show it by imitating her virtues and praying to Her often”¹.
- Benedict XVI – in the context of the Year for Priest – said:

I therefore wish to speak of the link between Our Lady and the priesthood. This connection is deeply rooted in the Mystery of the Incarnation. When God decided to become man in his Son, he needed the freely-spoken „yes” of one of his creatures. God does not act against our freedom. And something truly extraordinary happens: God makes himself dependent on the free decision, the „yes” of one of his creatures; he waits for this „yes” [...]. Mary’s „yes” is therefore the door through which God was able to enter the world, to become man. So it is that Mary is truly and profoundly involved in the Mystery of the Incarnation, of our salvation.

¹ John Paul II, Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (PdV), 25 III 1992, nr 82.

And the Incarnation, the son becoming man, was the beginning that prepared the ground for the gift of himself; for giving himself with great love on the Cross to become Bread for the life of the world. Hence sacrifice, priesthood and Incarnation go together and Mary is at the heart of this mystery².

The teaching cited above raises questions: why is it so important to every priest to hold love for the Blessed Virgin Mary, and why should the resulting ministry of the sacrament of Holy Orders be her imitation? How should her imitation be executed?

LOVE FOR MARY IS THE WAY TO UNDERSTAND HER FAITH

Anyone who was ordained cannot forget that this sacrament is the mysterious arrival of God in his life. The decision of God, who calls to the priestly service, is free and totally free, always to him – who chooses in Christ before the creation of the word (Eph 1:4) – to the initiative. This fact excludes all pride and arrogance on the part of the called (cf. Heb 5:4).

Such humble attitudes – humility and humiliation – remind the priests of the Virgin Mary. Each of the called, who loves and worships the Mother of God and sees her obedience to the Heavenly Father – humbly accepts his call and pursues it. Her attitude is a model of adoption and implementation of the will of God addressed to man. She, by living in a close union with Christ, met the mystery of vocation (mystery of the vocation to serve the will of the creatures of the Creator). This mystery is inextricably linked to human faith, which is to take the word of God.

A priest, who loves Mary and knows her life, learns the secret of fulfilling vocation. Anyone in love with the priest's lifestyle seeks Mary to become an active part of his life. The priest, with his eyes fixed on Mary's relationship to God, sees her love and obedience. He acknowledges how she loves God and glorifies him with her virtues. What's more, the priest can see how she depends on this to make people exhibit more love towards her Son and obey his words. Jesus wants, just like her – through obedience and love – to please God.

For example, the Blessed Virgin can understand the truth, which correctly implements the priestly calling that anyone on a foundation of faith accepts divine revelation and faith through obedience to God. In his teaching John Paul II clearly pointed out an attitude of faith as an attitude of a man who „gives himself to God”. The structure of personal faith, in an act of faith, is that man responds to God with all his life; „The creature, who more than any other has lived the full truth of vocation, is Mary the virgin mother, doing so in intimate communion with Christ: No one has responded with a greater love than hers to the immense love of God” (PdV 36).

² Benedict XVI, *Więź z Maryją przemienia życie kapłanów*, „L'Osservatore Romano” (ed. pol.) 30,10 (2009), p. 32.

The priest, who was called to serve God and people, loves Holy Mary with all his heart, and sees her faith and unconditional (that is total) obedience. For example, he appreciates her personal entrustment to God and recognises what it is. The Mother of Christ showing God the obedience of faith fully entrusted to him. She showed us that God reveals himself to obedience of faith. „The obedience of faith (Rom 16:26; cf. 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) ‘is to be given to God, who reveals an obedience to which man commits his entire self freely, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God, assenting to the truth revealed by Him’” (DV 5). This exact description of faith found perfect realization in Mary that was clear in the announcement. Mary at the Annunciation exercised „the obedience of faith” to the One who spoke to her through his messenger. She, by the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals his will, bears the whole „novelty” of the faith.

During the years of Jesus’ hidden life in the house at Nazareth, Mary’s life too is hid with Christ in God (Col 3:3) through faith. For faith is contact with the mystery of God. Everyday Mary is in constant contact with the ineffable mystery of God made man, a mystery that surpasses everything revealed in the Old Covenant. From the moment of the Annunciation, the mind of the Virgin-Mother has been initiated into the radical „newness” of God’s self-revelation and has been made aware of the mystery. [...] The mother of that son, therefore, mindful of what has been told to her at the Annunciation, and in subsequent events, bears within herself the radical „newness” of faith: the beginning of the New Covenant. This is the beginning of the Gospel, the joyful Good News³.

For every priest, Mary is the model that fulfills the will of God. It is through her that „the obedience of faith” makes it possible (as far as it was from her dependent performance) to express the will of our Heavenly Father through the Son. She was perfectly faithful to the Son and his mission. In this way, she turned in priestly work of the Son⁴. On the road to love and honouring Mary, the priest will be able to understand what his participation in the saving work of Christ is. For Mary to believe was to change her life in the spirit of Christ, because of his work, which she was participating in. Her faith was constantly wandering and exploring the mystery of Christ⁵. Through the ministry arising from the sacrament of Holy Orders the need for obedience of faith can and should be shown. The priest should understand that the example of Mary, and now this attitude, is to show faith to others.

The fact that the priest as a theologian should primarily be a man of faith is emphasized in the teaching of John Paul II. The Pope emphasizes that faith in the Church establishes overlapping personal relationships between the believer and Jesus Christ. In his view this belief leads man to express an unconditional „yes” to

³ John Paul II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Mater* (RM), 25 III 1987, nr 17.

⁴ J. Wątroba, *Permanentna formacja duchowa kapłanów w świetle soborowych i posoborowych dokumentów Urzędu Nauczycielskiego Kościoła (1963–1994)*, Częstochowa 1999, p. 212.

⁵ A. Läpple, *Maryja w wierze i życiu Kościoła*, Warszawa 1991, p. 92.

Jesus Christ. It also „turns the believer into the Church and makes him a member of the Church as a community of faith” (PdV 53). Everyone in the Church must imitate Mary in her faith, but in a special way this should be done by the priest, who is called to communicate to God’s people of faith and the Holy Gospel. The task of the priest as a shepherd among the people is not only to give service and celebrate the sacraments, but also to wake the faith and bear witness to it. The priest will lead others to faith in so far as he believes and how he is subject to the will of God in imitation of Mary, which he imitates. The strength of the ministry of the priest is proportional to the strength of his faith⁶.

In a paper on the priesthood the Polish Pope states that the priest should stand in the truth and seek to expand his devotion to the catholic faith. He should renew your faith in the course of his ministry, and then faith will help him in achieving the love of Christ. This love – as God’s servant – he should give to people (cf. PdV 73). It must therefore develop their faith and strengthen it, since their devotion depends on the fruitfulness of his ministry. The road of faith – that in an ideal way has passed through Mary – is a road leading to the victory over sin and death. As the handmaiden of the Lord, listening to the words of God and preserving them, she is a signpost for the priest to the resurrection, which is achieved by finding God’s will and acting upon it every day.

So the priest’s everyday life should be the completion of the following truth: Even through baptism, confirmation, sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and many other gestures by the Community Church, Christ came to us without merit on our part. We should let Mary’s will help us take the simple heart of the preaching of God’s love and believe it in spite of doubts that society and our own mind oozes into our hearts! We should not be afraid! And if the problems will continue, we pray to act in faith in spite of them, as they are here to try our trust, and test our faith and commitment to God. We believe we will foster in-depth study of God’s word and continuous consideration of the Church, the living Tradition. We will also try to be true to ourselves, to come to the light. May we have a clear and strong faith, Bernadette! Since the dawn of his fifteen years, being handed a message by Mary, he had the courage to face the adult world of suspicion, to be faithful to what is received and to give testimony about him⁷.

The answer to the question why it is important in a priest’s life to love the Mother of God in her exploration of faith is given by John Paul II:

What does this faithfulness of Mary’s mean? What are the dimension of this faithfulness? The first dimension is called search. Mary was faithful first of all when she began, lovingly, to seek the deep sense of God’s plan in her and for the world. *Quomodo fiet? – How shall this be? – she asked the Angel of the Annunciation. [...]*

⁶ R. Cantalamessa, *Maryja zwierciadłem dla Kościoła*, Warszawa 1994, p. 64.

⁷ John Paul II, *W Lourdes uczymy się na czym polega miłość życia*, „L’Osservatore Romano” (ed. pol.) 4,7–8 (1983), p. 10.

There will not be faithfulness if it is not rooted in this ardent, patient, and generous search; if there is not in man's heart a question to which only God gives an answer, or rather, to which only God is the answer. The second dimension of faithfulness is called reception, acceptance. The *quomodo fiet?* is changed, on Mary's lips, to a *fiat*. Let it be done, I am ready, I accept: this is the crucial moment of faithfulness, the moment in which man perceives that he will never completely understand the „how”; [...] It is then that man accepts the mystery, gives it a place in his heart, just as Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart (Lk 2:19; cf. Lk 3:15). [...] This acceptance takes place, in short, through faith, which is the adherence of the whole being to the mystery that is revealed. The third dimension of faithfulness is „consistency”. To live in accordance with what one believes and alter one's own life to the object of one's adherence. To accept misunderstandings, persecutions, rather than a break between what one practices and what one believes: this is consistency. Here is, perhaps, the deepest core of faithfulness. But all faithfulness must pass the most exacting test: that of duration. Therefore the fourth dimension of faithfulness is „constancy”. It is easy to be consistent for a day or two. It is difficult and important to be consistent for one's whole life. [...] To be faithful means not betraying in the darkness what one has accepted in public⁸.

The Pope's teaching is clear. The attitude of the priest should consist of the implementation of the priestly vocation: search and find God's will, accept it and remain faithful to it forever.

The priest must remember that the effectiveness of preaching the Gospel is related to the witness of faith given by the preacher. This attitude of the certificate is possible only if the priest himself receives and carries the message of the Gospel in his own life. He is after all called to bear witness to the faith;

The testimony reflected by his life gives the priest his qualification and constitutes his most convincing sermon. The same ecclesiastical discipline that lived with real inner motivation turns out to be a providential aid in which to live his own identity, foster charity, and allow his testimony to shine forth. Without this all cultural preparation or rigorous organization would merely be an illusion. „Doing” without „being with Christ” is meaningless⁹.

This faith is expressed in the Eucharist and the sacraments; each priest ought to be the leader of faith in every community. He leads all those that God places before him. He is obliged to respond to their questions and concerns, assist lost and undecided. People recognizing the priest as a witness of faith, they feel affirmed in their beliefs¹⁰.

⁸ John Paul II, *Mexico semper fidelis*. Homilia wygłoszona podczas pierwszej Mszy świętej sprawowanej przez Ojca Świętego na ziemi meksykańskiej w katedrze metropolitalnej w Meksyku, in: *Nauczanie papieskie*, vol. 2, 1 (styczeń–czerwiec 1979), ed. E. Weron, A. Jaroch, Poznań 1990, p. 65.

⁹ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priest*, 31 I 1994, Conclusion.

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Kapłan – człowiekiem wiary*, „L'Osservatore Romano” (ed. pol.) 12 bis (1989), p. 20.

John Paul II shows the possibility of strengthening the faith of the priests, for those who associate themselves with Mary. If any of them feels that his faith weakens, or becomes unstable, he should resort to the one, who before the birth of Jesus has been called blessed, because she believed it. Mary's heroic obedience of faith is revealed at the end of the drama of Golgotha, in which participation was included in the redemptive work of Her Son. According to the Pope the crucifixion of Christ was the trial of faith for Mary.

Standing at the foot of the cross, Mary is the witness, humanly speaking, of the complete negation of these words. On that wood of the cross her son hangs in agony as one condemned. „He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows...he was despised, and we esteemed him not”: as one destroyed (cf. Is 53:3-5). How great, how heroic then, is the obedience of faith shown by Mary in the face of God's „unsearchable judgments”! How completely she „abandons herself to God” without reserve, offering the full assent of the intellect and the will' to him whose „ways are inscrutable” (cf. Rom 11:33)! And how powerful to be the action of grace in her soul, how all-pervading is the influence of the Holy Spirit and his light and power! Through this faith Mary is perfectly united with Christ in his self-emptying. For „Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men”: precisely on Golgotha „humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (cf. Phil 2:5-8). At the foot of the cross, Mary, through faith, shares in the shocking mystery of this self-emptying. This is perhaps the deepest „kenosis” of faith in human history (RM 18).

Mary, by her special share in the mystery of redemption, plays an important role in the lives of priests. As the mother of God, who is in communion with the son in the work of salvation – from the moment of conception until his death – is close to those entrusted with the body and blood of Christ. Priests should learn from Mary's love, which allows for a full union with the redeemer in the mystery of his Eucharistic sacrifice and presence¹¹. Mary, accepting in faith the gift of God's Incarnate Word, is located at the source of the Eucharist. It is through the obedience of faith that the only-begotten Son of God became man in the womb of the Unsullied Virgin. Mary and her faith becomes a way to enter into the mystery of Christ's redemptive sacrifice.

Celebrants celebrating the Eucharist should be aware of suffering of his Mother in the redemptive work of her Son. The mother's agony of heart, which has agreed to the destruction of her son, is the summit of the presence of Mary in the mystery of Christ and the Church on earth. This is also the peak towards the „pilgrimage of faith”. This truth is essential to the development of the spiritual life of priests; each

¹¹ John Paul II, „*Tak*” *Chrystusowi*, „*tak*” *Kościółowi*. Homilia podczas spotkania z pielgrzymami na Jasnej Górze, „L'Osservatore Romano” (ed. pol.) 18,7 (1997), p. 39.

of them needing to be sure that the spiritual deepening that ties with the Mother of God, contributes to strengthening their faith¹².

Looking at Mary and her faith, one can notice the following fact: The example of communion with the mystery of God revealed the mystery of Christ's life to believers. For Mary, this mystery has become present among the people. Mary's motherhood does not occur only in the body, it enters a person on the grounds of her faith. This is motherhood at the Annunciation that Mary faithfully expressed, and at the cross she remained without reservation (cf. LG 62). At the foot of the cross emerged the co-operation of Mary in the work of Christ, her son – the Redeemer. Through this cooperation – she participated in the suffering and love for all people (which was returned to the mission of Christ) – the motherhood of Mary was thus transformed. It was filled with an ardent love for the people to be in communion with Christ, to assist in the restoration of supernatural life to souls (cf. RM 40).

Love for Mary and getting to know her faith enables the priest to understand the truth that on Golgotha she became the Mother of the Church. In a special way she became the Mother of priests, too. She becomes a mother and educator, who cares for each of them and teaches them to become a fully formed image of Christ. That is why Pope John Paul II associates closely the ministry of priests with a filial devotion to the Mother of Christ. He has been entrusted to her care on the development of priestly life in the Church. Just as John was introduced by Jesus in filial arrangement with Mary, and took her as his Mother, so every priest has a duty to take Mary into his home (Jn 19:27). The priest, acting on behalf of Christ, should love Mary as Jesus loved her. In this filial devotion the priest may entrust Mary with his entire ministry and the plans and difficulties that we meet in life¹³. The priests, in filial devotion to the Mother of Christ, learn the full truth of being a son and a child of God. From Mary's maternity they learn the nature of their priesthood. Their hearts should burn with a desire to reflect the maternal love that characterizes the whole Church.

The analogy occurring between the Church and the Virgin Mary is of a particular importance for the priests, who tie their priesthood with celibacy. Mary shows them that the virginal life allows them to participate in the internal life of the Church; the priest, who remains faithful to the promises of celibacy, follows the path of the Virgin of Nazareth. It is a way to remain a faithful spouse. With the help of Mary, each priest promising to lead a celibate life can (and should) find in his heart a deeper understanding of that shown by the Church of the way (cf. HT 5). As it was noted by Pope Pius XI, „thinking about Mary and her contemplation of the face leads to purity of life, which is a basic human dignity. They are also

¹² John Paul II, *Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 1988* (HT), 25 III 1988, No. 2.

¹³ John Paul II, *Obecność Maryi w życiu kapłana*, in: *Anioł Pański z Papieżem Janem Pawłem II*, vol. 4, ed. S. Dziwisz, M. Nowacki, T. Rakoczy, Vatican 1992, p. 176.

the salvation of those who fight against evil, and those who are called to a more perfect life¹⁴.

Effort to maintain purity in the life of a priest may be assisted by Mary. He should see in her a source of hope and joy. She is after all (filled with the grace of God) through his obedience and faith a victory over sin. A priest therefore shall see Mary's support in the fight against the temptations of Satan. Through the imitation of Mary, priests retain and multiply hope to compete in the ultimate victory of Christ over sin. They learn to believe that perfect chastity is possible in spite of weakness which presents the thought of purity as something unattainable. Testimony of truth and love will be given by Mary to strengthen courageous priests in pursuit of perfect chastity for life. Mary is an inexhaustible source of confidence, because she is our mother. Each of us can say: Jesus has strengthened me, loved me (Mark 10:21). Christ looked at me and loved me. He looked in a particular way and loved in a special way. From the height of the cross he said to the disciple, pointing to his mother: This is your mother (Jn 19:27). So if „to take the call”, „to select the priesthood”, „to persevere in the priesthood” means „rely on love” (1 Jn 4:16), then in all our lives we must embrace Mary with a very deep love remembering that the look from the cross and the last words of our master were: „This is your mother”. Within this faith and the trust our priesthood is built up. It takes on a particular similarity to the one who was a Son of Mary and became the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29). It takes time in itself for a special kind of personal ray of hope and the trust that is so indispensable for man's set up, for the sometimes difficult road of life, on which lies the answer of the eternal Love¹⁵.

IMITATION OF MARY BY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIESTLY MINISTRY

In the sacrament of ordination priests were commissioned a triple mission: prophetic, priestly and royal one. Mary – Mother of every priest wishes to help priests in performing these tasks. Her support is shown in a priest's life and determines the correct completion of this triple mission. Imitating her attitude a priest will be able to know what the perfect fulfillment of the benefits of the sacrament of the Holy Orders is and what he is therefore obliged to do.

The task of effective proclamation of the Good News by a priest depends on whether it was first adopted and considered in his heart. Adopting the most perfect specimen of God's word is Mary. Saint Elizabeth recognized this attitude of Mary and therefore called her „blessed”. This title was given because she believed that

¹⁴ Qu. in: M. Dąbrowska (ed.), *Z Maryją w każdy dzień. Rozważania Maryjne na cały rok na podstawie Pisma Świętego i wypowiedzi Świętych*, fat. A. Gołuch, Poznań 2001, p. 117.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Powołanie jest darem Bożym w Jezusie Chrystusie*, in: *Nauczanie...*, p. 186.

this was indeed spoken by the Lord (cf. Lk 1:42-45). The truth communicated by the Gospel was kept by Mary throughout her life. She pondered in her heart what was revealed to her from God and what she witnessed (cf. Lk 2:19). Imitating her attitude is a hope for priests who are susceptible to the temptation of activism. It helps them not to abandon the practice of *lectio divina*, and to find time for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

In addition, Mary's daily life – filled with silent prayer and diligent work – took a form of fruitful perseverance in her Son amidst the agony. In this way she gives us the doctrine of the Redeemer – his saving love. Imitating his Mother, therefore, becomes the priest's command to proclaim Christ's own conduct, a living witness of faith and faithful love. The priest will also learn courage and unshakeable loyalty to the Saviour, despite the difficulties and dangers. Mary, who as the humble handmaid of the Lord did not seek human glory, teaches the priests humility and obedience to God, to distinguish truth from falsehood, to reject evil and choose the virtuous. She is a teacher of cooperation with the grace of God and she attains holiness.

Holiness is not a static element in the life of Mary. There is a constant component of her life received at the time of conception. Certainly it is the never-ending process of discovering God's love that seeks to fully embrace the life of man. Mary is constantly evolving in the deeper meaning of the mystery of God who is everything. This growth has allowed her the willingness to carry out the will of God in every moment. She grew up on the grounds of the sanctity of everyday life, which is characterized by responding to every inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The same inspiration that makes up the next day of the ministry of priests, calling on them to answer to the model Mary answered to¹⁶.

Reflection in the heart of the word of God and the awareness that all life belongs to God helped Mary to convert every moment of this life into prayer and sacrifice. So it is a model for priests, prayer and the offering of sacrifice. Staring at the Mother of God they will be able not only to understand the sacramental ministry assigned to them, but also do it for God wholeheartedly. Taking up this ministry is the way in which the Church grows in its holiness. At that time the priest fulfilled a mission to preach Christ and bear witness to him. While meditating upon the help of Mary in the sacramental ministry of priests, it is worth recalling the teaching of John Paul II; The only sacrifice of Jesus was his active participation, Mary, first among the redeemed, the Mother of the Church stood beside the Crucified, suffering deeply with her only-begotten Son, the sacrifice of her united in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to his sacrificial destruction. They gave themselves to the Father¹⁷.

¹⁶ G.A. Maloney, *Maryja – Łonem Boga*, fat. W. Laszewski, Warszawa 1993, p. 110.

¹⁷ *The Eucharist in the teaching of John Paul II. Anthology of expression*, ed. J. Żukowicz, Kraków 1987, p. 286.

The main task of priests should be concern for the sanctification of the faithful entrusted to them. The way in which this task is realized is, inter alia, atonement prayer, supplication, thanksgiving and praise. This is not an easy road to take. However by loving Mary, a priest can see that he is not alone on this road. She teaches him how to follow the difficult path that she undertook in her life, which remains a model to imitate. Events described in the Bible in Cana of Galilee (cf. Jn 2:1-11) include intercessory prayer study. The Mother of Christ teaches them to put themselves in a situation of another person, to help identify their needs and understand their viewpoints. It is here that the lesson of placing everyday matters into Christ's trust is learnt (especially with regards to the spiritual life of people he meets every day). In turn, the Magnificat, (Mary's hymn) is the best example of worshipful prayer and submission to God's thanksgiving. Mary worships the Almighty in all that He has done, and is grateful for everything that He did (as she puts it: great things). Looking at the Virgin Mary a priest understands that by providing the service to the People of God, he passes the test of trust in God. This is another example of the fact that everything comes from God who alone is good. In this way he becomes the mediator of the truth that God is love and promotes only virtue in the life of every human being. What's more, Mary teaches priests not to revel in good deeds that they have performed, but to give thanks for everything, to praise the Holy Trinity with love.

While the Gospel of John seems to put Mary in a symbolic womanly role, rather than a personal one, Luke shows her as the perfect disciple. The annunciation is for us; the Magnificat is our song. We too have to ponder in our hearts „all these things” about Jesus in order to unfold their meaning. Mary, in her whole person, is the Christian as he or she is meant to be. Luke shows her as a woman, who is holy, full of grace, one in whom God was able to have his way. And so we have in Mary a living message, a living portrayal, of ourselves and our destiny. Mary is the recipient of grace, unmerited and unasked for. Everything is God's work from first to last. She is addressed as a „highly favoured one”. What has she done to deserve this accolade? Precisely nothing! She is favoured because of what God has done for her... God favours, God gives, God acts and loves and cherishes. Mary simply responds, takes the word into herself, lets it bear fruit¹⁸.

By joining the celebration of the Eucharist, the priest is called to ensure that the sacrifice of the Saviour is merged with his personal sacrifice. He is called to ensure that his efforts, suffering, fasting and mortification are offered to God. Then all that is his life, and joined with Christ, will serve the salvation of men. Mary's life can and should encourage each priest to learn the life of giving himself to God for the salvation of the world, and understand the value of such an attitude. The Mother of Christ lived her life in faithful union with her son (cf. Jn 19:25).

¹⁸ E.R. Obbard, *A Year with Mary*, „Living Faith” 17,3 (2001), December 12.

During his earthly life, Jesus revealed that he is the King (cf. Jn 18:36-37). However, as he himself said, his power lies not only in the fact that he is the supreme lawgiver (cf. Jn 13:34, Mt 28:18-20) and holds court over the world (cf. Mt 25:31-46, Jn 5:22-27), but most of all that he came to serve. Jesus during his earthly life has repeatedly demonstrated that his „reign” is to serve, and confirmed this clearly during the Last Supper by washing the Apostles’ feet (cf. Jn 13:1-12) and then giving his life for us. Christ requires the same of his students, as we can learn from the words spoken by him in the upper room: If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example so that you also may do even as I have done to you (Jn 13:14-15).

For each priest Mary acts as a model in fulfilling the royal mission as well as a particular service to another human. It is not only „the handmaid of the Lord” that we see in the scene of the Annunciation, but immediately after this event she becomes a „servant of the people”, which is confirmed by the scene of the Visitation of Saint Elizabeth. Mary goes to her older cousin, who feels blessed in being able to assist her and serve God in the period preceding the birth of her child.

The second scene of the Gospel which shows the subservient attitude of Mary is a description of the wedding at Cana of Galilee. Mary is shown here as the first one who recognizes the needs and deficiencies of people and tries to solve them interceding with her Son. This will be the priest’s „royal service”. Each priest not only has to wait for someone to ask him for help, but first he has to see the needs of his neighbours, and try to solve them without looking at the comments and feedback from the environment. It is in the spirit of the scene from Cana of Galilee that cardinal Tarcisio Bertone made the following comment:

This passage from the Gospel may be to those who we are most familiar with. We see how the mother of Jesus was the only one who realized that the wine had run out. She does not care about herself or about how she will be received. Her eyes and heart are turned only on the young couple and she invites everyone to be happy and that the feast be properly celebrated. She walks so the son, and says: They have no wine (Jn 2:3). Mary receives it as it is a holiday and the joy of both spouses. Like her, we too should be addressed to the priests of the Lord, full of concern for words thinking of those who need help, mercy, forgiveness and solidarity to the Lord, for them could make the „sign” that saved the wedding at Cana. How much need for the „character” of the Lord, His presence in our world! At Cana, Mary points the way to the servants: Do whatever he tells you (Jn 2:5). It is the royal road to listen to the Gospel that we priests should follow the first, with perseverance, educating people entrusted to us to follow her everyday¹⁹.

Thus Mary is the model for every priest, showing us that we must have our eyes and hearts wide open to the needs of others and serve them wholeheartedly.

¹⁹ *Nasza miłość niech będzie podobna do miłości kapłańskiego serca Chrystusa*, „L’Osservatore Romano” (ed. pol.) 31,3-4 (2010), p. 47.

Mary sees all people in God, and loves the love of God: the love that Jesus revealed to us. In each particle Mary sees him, because she sees people as those for whom her Son died on the cross. She only wants for us what Jesus wants for us. Hence, her intercession is identical to the intercession of the Saviour. A loving priest wishes to follow his spiritual mother who always wanted to hurry up with the help of all people. In that way, we will need to continue to fulfill her desires. She is present with us as a mother who never stops to think about her children.

While hanging on the Cross, Jesus not only gave his Mother to his disciple John, but also John to Mary (cf. Jn 19:26-27). This is not only a description of the relationship of the disciple John and Mary, but it is also a fact of the relationship that exists between the Church and Mary. In this relationship we should find a special relationship between the Mother of Christ and his priest. This relationship lets you see the mother of the Saviour as the mother of each inclusion in novelty of life in Christ. The participation of Mary in the mystery of redemption in Christ makes the motherly love that she embraces the whole priestly ministry; the ministry of the people of God that keeps the unity of Christ²⁰.

This reflection of the role of Mary in priestly life can be concluded with the words of Tarcisio Bertone spoken during his visit in Wrocław. The Vatican Secretary of State – recalling the figure of St. John of Ars – explained that Mary calls today's priests to seek Jesus' help in times of crisis and demotivation, to seek her help:

Dear priests, we know how much the Cure of Ars felt inadequate to do such a great job. And yet he was a giant in the faith, in prayer, zeal for souls! His testimony gives us light and strengthens us. We too, thinking about the dignity of the priesthood in Christ's Church, feel the contrast in the light of our limitations and our frailty. In certain moments of particular difficulty, or fatigue, will can also and experience something similar to that which took place at the wedding at Cana in Galilee: wine runs out, that is, can weaken internal enthusiasm and joy of the first years of priesthood. Neglect, especially in prayer, brings a heart dryness. There is a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration [...]. Dear brothers! It is in these moments we rely on the caring gaze of Mary! She was the first, and the only who realized and said to Jesus: See, there's no more wine. So we should not be afraid! He is always here and is in our priestly life and always present, he and our mother. Thanks to them the „wedding of our priesthood” will never end. We can always renew our love and also by moments of difficulty become even „better” people, who are closer to the priestly Heart of Christ²¹.

²⁰ W. Słomka, *Duchowość kapłańska*, Lublin 1996, p. 84.

²¹ T. Bertone, *Nasza miłość...*, p. 48.

THE ROLE OF MARY IN THE LIFE OF A PRIEST

Summary

In the teachings of the Church is depicted the relationship of Mary with the life and ministry of priests. The teaching cited above raises questions: why is it so important to every priest to hold love for the Blessed Virgin Mary, and why should the resulting ministry of the sacrament of Holy Orders be her imitation? How should her imitation be realized?

A priest, who loves Mary and knows her life, learns the secret of fulfilling vocation. Anyone in love with the priest's lifestyle seeks Mary to become an active part of his life. The priest, with his eyes fixed on Mary's relationship to God, sees her love and obedience. This exact description of faith found perfect realization in Mary that was clear in the announcement. She, by the full submission of intellect and will to God, who reveals his will, bears the whole „novelty” of the faith. Testimony of truth and love will be given by Mary to strengthen courageous priests in pursuit of perfect chastity for life. Mary is an inexhaustible source of confidence, because she is their mother.

In the sacrament of ordination priests were commissioned a triple mission: prophetic, priestly and royal. In performing these tasks, each of them wants to help the Holy Mary – Mother's Priest. Its support includes, inter alia, in that it showed in his life, which determines the correct completion of this triple mission. Imitating her attitude they will be able to know what the perfect fulfillment of the benefits of the sacrament of Holy Orders obliges. The task of effectively proclaiming the Good News by the priest depends on whether it was first adopted and considered in his own heart. Reflection in the heart of the word of God and the awareness that all life belongs to God helped Mary to convert every moment of this life into prayer and sacrifice. Events described in the Bible (cf. Jn 2:1-11) include intercessory prayer study. The Mother of Christ teaches them to put themselves in a situation of another person, to help identify their needs and understand their viewpoints.

ROLA MARYI W ŻYCIU KAPŁANA

Streszczenie

W nauczaniu Kościoła ukazywany jest związek Najświętszej Maryi Panny z życiem i posługą kapłanów. W dokumentach Soboru Watykańskiego II, tekstach błogosławionego Jana Pawła II czy też Benedykta XVI wielokrotnie podkreślana jest rola Matki Bożej w rozwoju duchowego życia kapłanów, od którego zależny pełniona przez nich posługa duszpasterska. Jako aktualna jawi się zatem potrzeba analizowania tego zagadnienia, dzięki czemu ci, którzy przyjęli sakrament święceń, będą mogli zarówno na nowo odkrywać swoją tożsamość, jak i skuteczniej wypełniać zlecone im zadania. Niniejszy artykuł stanowi odpowiedź na pytania: dlaczego tak bardzo ważna dla każdego kapłana jest miłość do Najświętszej Maryi Panny i dlaczego wynikająca z sakramentu święceń posługa powinna być Jej naśladowaniem? W jaki sposób naśladowanie to powinno być urzeczywistniane? Miłość kapłana do Maryi – jak wykazano w tekście – stanowi drogę poznania Jej niezachwianej wiary w Boga. Obdarowani sakramentem święceń mogą wówczas dostrzec także Jej bezwarunkowe (czyli całkowite) posłuszeństwo, zobaczyć, na czym polega osobowe zawierzenie się Bogu. Matka Zbawiciela, poprzez pełną uległość rozumu i woli wobec objawiającego swoją wolę Ojca Przedwiecznego, nosi w sobie całkowitą „nowość” wiary.

Dla Niej wierzyć znaczyło to samo co zmieniać swe życie w duchu Chrystusa; Jej wiara była wędrówką i ciągłym zgłębianiem tajemnicy Chrystusa, w której uczestniczyła. Przez posługę wynikającą z sakramentu święceń każdy z kapłanów powinien ukazywać potrzebę posłuszeństwa wiary. W sakramencie święceń kapłanom zlecona została potrójna misja: prorocka, kapłańska i królewska. W wykonywaniu tych zadań każdemu z nich pomagać pragnie Matka Zbawiciela. Jej pomoc zawiera się między innymi w tym, że w swoim życiu pokazała, od czego zależy poprawne wypełnianie tej potrójnej misji. Naśladując Jej postawę, kapłani będą mogli poznawać, na czym polega doskonale wypełnianie płynących z sakramentu święceń zobowiązań. Zadanie skutecznego głoszenia Dobrej Nowiny przez kapłana jest uzależnione od tego, czy najpierw została ona przyjęta i rozważona w głębi serca przez niego samego. Rozważanie w sercu słowa Boga i świadomość, że całe życie należy do Niego, pozwoliło Maryi zamieniać każdą chwilę życia na modlitwę i składanie ofiary. Z kolei opisane na kartach Pisma Świętego wydarzenia w Kanie Galilejskiej zawierają Jej naukę stawiania się w sytuacji drugiego człowieka, dostrzegania jego potrzeb. Ma tam miejsce lekcja oddawania Chrystusowi codziennych spraw (zwłaszcza dotyczących życia duchowego) ludzi, których kapłan spotyka każdego dnia.

Keywords: Mary, priest, spiritual life

Słowa kluczowe: kapłan, Maryja, życie duchowe