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Synodal Challenges. An attempt at a theological evaluation inspired by the teachings of Blessed Honorat Koźmiński

Introduction

“The multitude of believers was one in heart and soul. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they owned” (Acts 4:32). The characteristic of the early Church was love, faith and purpose. The common pursuit of eternal happiness, following Christ together, or being together are all indications of synodality. The Church now faced the great challenge of conducting the 16th Universal Synod. Renewal of the life of the Church requires launching processes of consultation with the entire People of God, as well as drawing on Tradition and on the experience of Christians.

The aim of the Synod is the renewal of pastoral directions, spiritual and pastoral conversion and community and apostolic discernment, as the International Theological Commission explains in the document *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*². “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium”³. This article aims at presenting the challenges of the present Synod and its theme, taking into account the signs of the times and an attempt at a theological evaluation inspired by the person and teachings of Blessed Honorat Koźmiński. This begs the question: what can

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² International Theological Commission, *Synodalność w życiu i misji Kościoła*, trans. A. Sejbuk, Kraków 2021, No. 103-105.

³ *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, Vatican 2021, <https://www.synod.va/en/news/the-vademecum-for-the-synod-on-synodality.html> [accessed on 15.12.2021], No. 1.2.

a 19th century, little-known monk and priest say about the problems of the contemporary Church? Undoubtedly, Honorat was a kind of renewer of spiritual life in the Church at that time. He was excellent at reading the signs of the times and meeting the challenges posed by the political and religious world. His teachings were not exclusively evangelistic, often referring to the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas and other eminent Christian authorities, he explained the mysteries of the faith, the teachings of the Church and in particular the events of the life of Jesus Christ⁴.

The article will essentially use the comparative method, consisting in searching for and describing the synodal documents and explaining the similarities or differences between the outlook on the present situation in the Church and similar phenomena occurring in the times of Fr Honorat, between contemporary synodal assumptions and the theological foundations that can be found in the teachings of the Blessed. Synodal themes will therefore stimulate theological reflection and evaluation. Koźmiński's teachings may prove to be timeless and inspiring when it comes to understanding these issues.

Fundamentals of synodality

The creation of man as a social being called to have a special relationship with God is one of the biblical foundations of synodality. And although sin disrupted human relationships and the original communion with God, in Jesus Christ the hope for a New Covenant has awakened, which was to be based no longer on people's unfaithfulness, but was engraved in their hearts. Through his death and resurrection, Christ reunited people with God and founded the Church. Therefore, synodality in the context of the New Testament means following the Risen Christ, as well as following the One who called Himself "the Way" (cf. John 14:6). All believers who have been incorporated in Christ through Holy Baptism and destined for immortality in the Kingdom of Heaven are invited to follow this path. All are also called to participate actively in the life of the Church. "The synodal process is not just an assembly of bishops, but a journey of all the faithful, in which the local Church has an integral role to play"⁵. In this context, the entire People of God are called to listen to the Word of God, to discern the signs of the times, to participate and share responsibility in the mission of the Church⁶.

⁴ Blessed Honorat Koźmiński's teachings are dogmatically correct and he can be called a theologian. The research on the orthodoxy of Koźmiński's teachings were confirmed in a dogmatic study: A. Pędrak, *Soteryjny wymiar Najświętszego Oblicza Chrystusa. Teologia bł. Honorata Koźmińskiego na tle współczesnej dogmatyki*, Poznań 2022.

⁵ *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, op. cit., No. 1.2.

⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*, No. 1.3.

These truths were well understood and put into practice by Blessed Honorat Koźmiński. The time of Fr Honorat's greatest activity coincided with the period of partitions and repressions following the January Uprising. Pastoral work was abruptly interrupted by the dissolution of religious orders. The Russian Tsar's aim was to destroy the Church in Poland, starting with religious life. The external motive for founding congregations without habits was therefore the political situation, but it was through faith and prayer that Honorat discovered the possibility of serving God and people in a hidden life, following the example of the Holy Family. His teachings were inspired by the challenges faced by the Church at the time.

Statistics and research data show that currently fewer and fewer people are interested in religious life. Being a monk or a nun became less popular and ceased to give meaning to people's personal lives, causing a significant decline in the number of people entering the monkhood. In the face of this phenomenon, a contemporary sociologist, Józef Baniak, asks the following question: are we dealing with a crisis of the called or a crisis of vocations?⁷ What is certain is that God never stops calling people to serve Him. It is He who calls people and people who respond to the calling. It seems, therefore, that the problem lies in the condition of those called. When it comes to the political situation, the times of Fr Honorat were much more difficult, people's freedom of choice was restricted, and yet the religious life did not die. It is impossible to give a definite answer to the question of why there is a lack of vocations. In the Church's teachings there are indications of how to avoid this crisis. According to the 1996 Exhortation *Vita consecrata*, charism and identity (including religious identity) must be constantly developed and adapted to specific situations. All the children of the Church should feel a deep need for conversion and holiness. This obedience to the Father's will is the source of true freedom, chastity expresses the longing of the heart which finds no solace in any created love, and poverty fuels the hunger and desire for justice which God has promised to satisfy (cf. Matt. 5:6)⁸. This need applies above all to consecrated life, but it also lies at the heart of every charism. Nevertheless, religious life is not the only way of following Christ. In his teachings, Honorat considered conversion, atonement, participation in the sacraments, unity and love to be the key elements of spiritual life. He engaged every estate of the realm in the Kingdom of Poland in living the Gospel, in reparatory love and veneration of the Face of God⁹.

⁷ Cf. J. Baniak, *Kryzys powołanych czy kryzys powołań? Zakonne powołania sióstr i braci w Polsce w latach 1900-2017*, "Przegląd religioznawczy" 1(2018)267, pp. 27, 30.

⁸ Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Posynodalna Adhortacja apostolska "Vita consecrata"*, Poznań 1996, No. 36.

⁹ Cf. C. C. Billot, *Odnaleziony przez Jezusa. Bł. Honorat Koźmiński*, trans. K. Krycińska, Warszawa 2009; E. Jabłońska-Deptuła, *Trwanie i budowa. Honorat Koźmiński, kapucyn, 1829-1916*, Warszawa 1986.

The most important matter for Koźmiński was to inculcate in the faithful the desire to preach the glory of God and to bring the Gospel of Christ to the environment to which one was sent in order to convert the erring people at grass-roots level and to show them the way of Jesus¹⁰. The question arises, then, as to how, in the present situation, to bring every estate under the Church's care, how to involve lay people in active pastoral activity? Certainly the way to do this is through active sacramental practice, especially of the Eucharist, and reading of the Holy Scripture. At the time of the disappearance of the sense of sin, it is worth to draw attention to the role of reparatory love, as will be discussed later in this article. Traditional evangelical missions in the everyday environment are also important.

As Koźmiński noted, God calls man on the path of a certain ordinariness. Christ, through his hidden life, wanted to show that perfection does not depend on doing great things, but on doing simple works in obedience to God's will. In modern times this truth has not changed. Following the path of daily life and fidelity to one's vocation, in the place where one lives, in ecclesial communion, can be more valuable than doing spectacular things, which are often beyond individual human strengths and abilities. Synodality is a particular *modus vivendi et operandi* of the Church, which is realised in the communion of the People of God, in walking together along the paths of evangelisation¹¹. The sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit impels all the baptised to evangelise. By virtue of being baptised, every believer has become a missionary¹². The mission of the faithful is to bear witness to and proclaim the gospel in the environment in which they live, because the baptised are members of the priestly, prophetic and royal People of God.

The present Synod is an invitation to the entire People of God, and to each individual, to take the path of conversion and commitment to the matters of the Church and society. Importantly, synodality is not an event or a slogan, but rather a way of being in which the Church lives out her mission in the world¹³. In order to properly discover the vocation of individual members of the Church, it should be always read from a biblical perspective, submitting to the Holy Spirit who is at work at all times. Every baptised person is responsible for the ecclesial community and is called to proclaim the Word of God in the place where he lives, to look in the direction in which the Lord is looking¹⁴. The International Theological Commission stresses that synodality is fundamental to the renewal of the Church.

¹⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 31-32.

¹¹ Cf. *Ibidem*.

¹² Cf. Franciszek, *Adhortacja apostolska "Evangelii gaudium". O głoszeniu ewangelii w dzisiejszym świecie*, Kraków 2013, No. 118-119.

¹³ *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, op. cit., No. 1.3.

¹⁴ Cf. *Ibidem*, No. 1.4.

The ecclesiology of the People of God explains the unique dignity and mission of all the baptised, consisting in the exercise of their various charisms, vocations and ministries¹⁵.

Encounter, listen, discern

Pope Francis, in his homily during the opening Mass of the Synod, highlighted that “encounter, listen, discern” are the three verbs that characterise the idea of this Synod. The Gospels often depict Jesus being on the road, accompanying people, listening to their questions and helping them to discern what to do to reach eternal life. What does this mean for us? God is not a distant God, staying far away from reality, but He walks with us, joins us no matter where we are on the journey, or what condition we are in. The Pope points out that encounters with Christ change our lives, renew us and heal us. God has time for us and He wants us to have time for Him and to want to relate to others. Encounters are difficult, they require readiness, courage, openness to the other person and their life story¹⁶.

Reading Fr Honorat’s writings, one gets the impression that the world of that time was mentally no different from the world of today. In one of his letters he wrote: “We live in such sad times as have not yet been seen since the coming of Christ. Never has the world been so deceived by Satan as it is now. Nor has it ever been so far removed from the principles of the Holy Gospel, immersed in the pursuit of worldly life, riches, vain earthly glory, as we see today”¹⁷. It is worth looking at the situation in the world and in the Church as Honorat did. In the time of sorrow and loneliness, captivity and persecution, Koźmiński found a way to work with people. It was the confessional. There he encountered people, listened to them and discerned. He looked with great faith at the situation in the Church, believing that the power of revival could be manifested at any time if only there were people ready to work and be radical¹⁸. It is important to find a way and time to meet with God and with each other.

Another task of the Synod is listening; it is from listening that a real encounter is born. Jesus listened to people’s questions, He did not leave them alone. He did not give a simple answer, nor did He offer concrete solutions. He was with

¹⁵ Cf. International Theological Commission, *Synodalność w życiu i misji Kościoła*, op. cit., No. 6.

¹⁶ Cf. *Homilia papieża Franciszka podczas mszy świętej na otwarcie Synodu na temat synodalności*, 10.10.2021, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/pl/homilies/2021/documents/20211010-omelia-sinodo-vescovi.html> [accessed on 2.03.2022].

¹⁷ H. Koźmiński, *Pisma, List 15*, Vol. 12, Warszawa 1997.

¹⁸ Cf. Ł. Woźniak, *Dzisiaj są czasy Świętego Franciszka i Ojca Honorata*, ”Wspólnota Honoracka. Pismo Rodziny Honorackiej” 2(2018)19, pp. 58-59.

people and listened to them¹⁹. Christ wanted to listen to everyone, to slowly enter into their hearts and bring them to God. Koźmiński points out that at all times Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them: He listens to them in the confessional and admits them to the Eucharistic table²⁰. Christ is always open, welcoming, listening and fulfilling.

“The Synod is a process of spiritual discernment, of ecclesial discernment, that unfolds in adoration, in prayer and in dialogue with the Word of God”²¹. Christ, when he calls himself the Way, adds that He is the Truth and the Life. In one of his letters, Koźmiński wrote that most people think that the times of the Church would be better if there were no wars and persecutions in the world, and everyone would experience freedom and liberty. Yet experience, based not only on the history of the chosen people and the Christians of the first centuries, shows that with the advent of freedom, zeal wanes and there is a return to paganism and a life without God²². Some people who leave the Church explain that they seek the truth, considering it to be everyone’s duty and man’s noblest aspiration. In discernment, it is important to pay attention to the purpose for which I am seeking the truth. Is it not for the satisfaction of my own needs, dreams, passions? Would I rather find a truth that gives me the freedom to think and do as I please? If God has declared that He has come to us to bear witness to the truth and has thus revealed to us the most certain proofs of his divinity and the meaning of life, to depart from these truths in order to seek another truth is a misunderstanding²³. The illusion of cultural omnipotence has produced a generation that is unable to take responsibility for themselves, that reject ecclesiastical structures, whether marriage, family or community, because they feel like they constrain them. A person who does not accept constraints, does not accept the other, cannot love, because to love is to allow oneself to be constrained, to do what the other wants²⁴.

The way of Christ is demanding and is based on freedom, but not the kind of freedom the world offers. The main obstacle to discerning the words of Christ according to Fr Honorat is pride. Despite many centuries of Christianity, the sons of this world remain in spiritual darkness. The love of various sins hinders them from accepting Christ’s teachings; they know that if they were to accept His prin-

¹⁹ Cf. *Homilia papieża Franciszka podczas mszy świętej na otwarcie Synodu na temat synodalności*, op. cit.

²⁰ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. II: *Opowiadanie o miłości Bożej w życiu publicznym Jezusa*, Włocławek 1909, pp. 223-224.

²¹ Cf. *Homilia papieża Franciszka podczas mszy świętej na otwarcie Synodu na temat synodalności*, op. cit.

²² Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Pisma, List 63*, Vol. 12, Warszawa 1997.

²³ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 204-205.

²⁴ Cf. Ł. Woźniak, *Ojciec Honorat świadkiem Bożego działania w Kościele i świecie*, “Współnota Honoracka. Pismo Rodziny Honorackiej” 1(2021)22, p. 37.

principles, they would have to give up their habits and addictions. So they do not follow the light, but prefer to remain stuck in the familiar darkness²⁵. It is very difficult to understand in this day and age that poverty and certain restrictions are good things that ensure eternal happiness. However, those who see the value in poverty and suffering find themselves closer to the kingdom of heaven²⁶. Today too, the important question is: what must I do to attain eternal life? What kind of truth am I looking for?

Communion, participation, mission

The three dimensions of the current Synod are communion, participation and mission. They are important pillars of the synodal Church. The communion that unites all the baptised has its source in the love and unity of the Holy Trinity²⁷. God is One, and He is Love (1 John 4:16). Love, on the other hand, is always a connection, a relationship, a community. God, being a community of Persons, gives us an example of true communion, in unity with Him and with other people. This privilege of man is already revealed in his creation. God's last creation was to be the link between the Creator and all previously created beings, it was to be the king of all nature, but also its commander, worshipping God in its own and all other beings' name. If, as Blessed Honorat writes, God has left traces of the Trinity in all creations, then in the creation of man He wanted to express the image of His Trinity, endowing him with being, reason and will. Creating man in his own image, He desired his exaltation from the beginning, He wanted to bring him closer to Himself, desired a relationship with him. This thought was often developed by Koźmiński in his works. He wrote that God Himself breathed life into man, because He wanted to personally bring the body formed by Himself to life and to embed His image in a certain way. He wanted this soul, formed as it were from his being, taken from under His heart, to forever remain in a mysterious relationship with its Creator. The infinite proof of God's love was the purpose for which God brought man to life. He created all other things for man, but him he created only for Himself, for man to love Him, to worship Him²⁸. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms this. Man is privileged because from the day he is born he is invited to have a unique relationship with the Creator. Only in communion with God can he find his happiness²⁹. Man's destiny is therefore communion

²⁵ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 202-203.

²⁶ Cf. Ibidem, pp. 240-242.

²⁷ Cf. *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, op. cit., No. 1.4.

²⁸ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. I: *Historja miłości Bożej względem rodu ludzkiego*, Włocławek 1909, pp. 131-135.

²⁹ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Huntington 2020, No. 27 (next: CCC).

with God. After his fall, God did not leave him alone; He constantly reaches out to him, cleanses him, transforms him and divinises him with His power and grace.

Participation is expressed in the fact that all People of God (lay, consecrated, clergy) are called to be fully involved in the life of the Church, to listen to the Holy Spirit, to pray, engage in dialogue, discern and advise in pastoral decisions³⁰. Koźmiński explains that the Holy Spirit, having once descended to the earth, does not leave it, He remains in the Church which He rules and, moreover, He enters every soul at baptism, gives it supernatural life, kindles the light of faith in the mind (cf. 2 Cor. 4,6), ignites it with the fire of His love (Rom. 5,5) and makes it inclined to virtue³¹. Not only does the Holy Spirit dwell within us, but through this indwelling He connects us with God by a bond of love. The Church teaches that the Holy Spirit pours into us the theological virtues and gives His seven gifts. “God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Rom. 5:5)”. That is to say, these gifts are parts of the same love; they are like sevenfold weapons to fight the powers of darkness³².

The Spirit also comes to the aid in our prayer. We should never forget about this wondrous presence. A Being equal to God dwells in us, originating from the Father and the Son, He creates and arranges the words in our hearts, He fills us with joy. According to the Scripture, when we cry out to God “Father”, the Holy Spirit Himself turns to God in prayer for us and with us. He alone knows what we should ask for and how we should pray³³. Prayer unites us with God, but also with other people. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* points out that for human beings living in a community is not an added value but a fundamental one, a requirement of nature³⁴. In this context, Honorat notes that the Holy Spirit, coming down to earth, immediately formed the first Christian community, giving it not only the usual gifts, but also special ones, such as the gift of tongues, healing, prophecy. The Christian community grew and by its example attracted new believers to Christ³⁵. Each member of the community receiving grace from God shares it with the whole community. This applies to confraternities, orders, congregations and all members of the Church. Honorat observes that, because of the “communion”, whatever a Christian does that is good, results in the benefit for all the faithful³⁶.

³⁰ Cf. *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, op. cit., No. 1.4.

³¹ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. IV: *Opowiadanie o miłości Bożej w uwielbieniu Jezusa*, Włocławek 1910, pp. 286-287.

³² Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 291.

³³ Cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 313-314.

³⁴ Cf. CCC, No. 1879.

³⁵ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. IV, op. cit., pp. 345-346.

³⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 360.

The Church exists to evangelise. Its mission is to bear witness to God's love especially for the morally, socially or economically lost³⁷. When Jesus sent out the disciples, He advised them to be humble, meek, proclaim peace and promise the Kingdom of God. The Saviour wanted the number of His followers to grow so that He could record the names of all those who worked faithfully in the Book of Life³⁸. When He was leaving this world, He gave his disciples a mission, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). In this way, as Koźmiński points out, Jesus not only ordered the apostles to teach all peoples, but through them He also called the whole Church, which He gave an unshakable permanence, to do the same. In this Church He was to remain spiritually present through His priests, preaching the good news and administering the sacraments through them. To this Church He called all nations, excluding no one. As He died for all, shedding His divine blood, so He called all to salvation and to bear witness to God's love. For Jesus is the light that enlightens every person who comes into this world (cf. John 1:9)³⁹. All of us who are baptised into Jesus Christ are able to lead a Christian life, we share in the merits of the Saviour. We become the children of God and the heirs of heaven. However, it is a relationship based on mutual love that requires a two-way commitment⁴⁰. God gives the baptised grace, but our attitude cannot be passive. We are called to love, to follow Christ, imitating him and continuing the evangelisation.

Spirituality of communion

The document of the International Theological Commission, following the thought of Pope Francis, emphasises that any renewal of the Church involves growth in the vocation of each of her members. The Church is called to ongoing conversion, which involves revitalising the mentality, attitudes, structures and practices in order to be ever more faithful to her vocation⁴¹. Koźmiński's writings do not address ecclesiality directly. However, in all of his works he touches on the subject of reparatory spirituality that unites all people⁴². It is a kind of proposal or

³⁷ Cf. *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, op. cit., No. 1.4.

³⁸ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 320-321.

³⁹ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. IV, op. cit., pp. 132-133.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 223-224.

⁴¹ International Theological Commission, *Synodalność w życiu i misji Kościoła*, op. cit., No. 104, Cf. also Franciszek, *Adhortacja apostołska "Evangellii gaudium"*, op. cit., No. 25-33.

⁴² The first motive that prompted Honorat to repay God was the sins of his youth. In his youth Honorat went through a period of rebellion against God – he lost his faith. But before he understood his sin and repented, he converted. During his studies at the Warsaw School of Fine Arts, he was accused of taking part in a political conspiracy against the Tsar's governor, Paskievich, and was imprisoned in the 10th Pavilion of the Warsaw Citadel. There, suffering terribly, he had a mystical

opportunity that the Blessed shows us – it is timeless and always new. And how necessary it is in these times of living without God and a sense of sinlessness. The idea of reparation has been a part of our faith since the dawn of history and through the centuries it has taken various forms⁴³.

Fr Honorat advised all believers to take up the task of reparation, considering it a duty but also a great privilege to participate in Jesus Christ's work of Redemption. Blessed Honorat considers the work of atonement to be his mission and vocation in life. Through the work of reparation, communion and fellowship (*communio sanctorum*) are expressed. In the spirit of solidarity, believers should take responsibility for their brothers. For just as the merits of one member benefit others, so the faults of one are to some extent the responsibility of others. In this sense, atonement is an opportunity to imitate Jesus Christ who, being innocent, took upon himself our faults and made reparation for them to the Heavenly Father⁴⁴. Koźmiński often emphasised the co-responsibility for one another and the care for perishing souls.

The Saviour once sorrowed in Gethsemane, both over the offence of the Divine Majesty, and over the loss of many souls for whom He was about to shed His most holy Blood. Today, as it grieves Him to see so many souls perish for ever in spite of so many means prepared by Him, so there is no greater consolation for Him than saving them⁴⁵.

St John Paul II also reminds us of this in his encyclical *Dives in misericordia*: "The Church has the right and duty to appeal to the God of mercy with a great cry", to cry out for those who have distanced themselves from God, who have pushed Him away, proclaiming in various ways that He is "unnecessary" to them⁴⁶. The God about whom the Pope writes is personal; He is a Father who is pained by the disregard, indifference and contempt shown to Him by modern man. Christian love towards God should therefore be doubly sacrificial, multiplied, it should be merciful love, so a compassionate, rewarding, reparative love⁴⁷.

experience and received the grace of conversion. Years later he described the event in the following words: "The Face of God descended on me". For the rest of his life a sense of his own sinfulness grew in him, as did his understanding of the need to make reparation to God for his faults, his admiration for the mercy of God and the beauty of the Face of God. Cf. A. Pędrak, *Soteryjny wymiar Najświętszego Oblicza Chrystusa*, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

⁴³ More on this topic can be found in: A. Pędrak, "Od satisfactio do redamatio". *Responsoryjna reinterpretacja idei wynagradzania*, "Roczniki Teologiczne" XLV(2018)2, pp. 85-99.

⁴⁴ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Nowy dar Jezusa*, Kraków 1891, pp. 85-86.

⁴⁵ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *O czci wynagradzającej*, Warszawa 1902, pp. 45-46.

⁴⁶ Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Encyklika o Bożym miłosierdziu "Dives in misericordia"*, in: *Encykliki Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*, Kraków 2006, No. 15.

⁴⁷ Cf. S. Nagy, *Wynagradzanie w tajemnicy Bożego miłosierdzia*, in: Jan Paweł II, „*Dives in misericordia*". *Tekst i komentarze*, red. S. Nagy, Lublin 1983, pp. 164-165.

Honorat very often referred to the Son of God as the “Repairer”. After original sin, He first had to repair human nature, and only then take on many other responsibilities, necessary for our salvation⁴⁸. Like St Anselm of Canterbury, Koźmiński also applies “repair” to the glory of God. Christ, although He had many reasons which brought Him to become a man and to die on the cross, took as His main purpose the supreme glory of God and the reparation. He alone was capable of becoming the atoning sacrifice for the faults of all mankind. However, citing the words of St Paul, Col. 1:24, he exhorts every person to co-operate in the work of Christ’s atonement. He points out, however, that all our acts of reparation are of value in so far as they are united with the Saviour’s reparation⁴⁹.

This raises the question: does God need our reparation? What should it look like? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that every person, by virtue of being a sinner, is called to do everything possible to make reparation and make amends, both to his neighbour and to God⁵⁰. Reparation therefore has a vertical and a horizontal character. In making reparation, Christians participate in the work of Christ, the one Redeemer. Through the work of repair, the baptised restore the order of God’s justice and love in the world, between persons and in persons, repairing the image of Christ in souls, through the constant renewal of the community⁵¹. For the Church fulfils a mission which is a participation in and, in a sense, a continuation of the messianic mission of Christ himself⁵². In creating us, God, who is Love, wanted us to be able to love and to become love through Him and in Him. This is also man’s first vocation.

The Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality clearly states that “walking together is only possible if it is based on the communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist”⁵³. The special place of man’s reconciliation with God and the realisation of the redemption and ongoing salvation of the world, of all generations and of each individual is precisely the Eucharist⁵⁴. The Eucharistic assembly is also the source and summit of communion in the communal sense. It is *res Sacramentum Ecclesiae*: union with the Triune God and unity among men, realised by the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus⁵⁵. In his works, Blessed Honorat de-

⁴⁸ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 111-112.

⁴⁹ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Nowy dar Jezusa*, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

⁵⁰ Cf. CCC, No. 1459, 1494.

⁵¹ Cf. T. Płonka, *Wynagradzanie w nauczaniu Kościoła*, in: *Idź i napraw! Materiały z sympozjum o tajemnicy wynagradzania*, red. M. Połomski, Górna Grupa 2015, p. 139.

⁵² Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Encyklika o Bożym Miłosierdziu “Dives in Misericordia”*, op. cit., No. 13.

⁵³ *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, op. cit., No. 5.3.

⁵⁴ Cf. R. Rak, *Eucharystia w historii Kościoła*, in: *Eucharystia*, red. J. Krucina, Wrocław 1987, p. 203, as cited in: A. Dyr, *Tajemnica Odkupienia w eucharystii mniejszej mszału*, in: *Tajemnica Odkupienia*, red. L. Balter et al., Poznań 1997, p. 397.

⁵⁵ Cf. International Theological Commission, *Synodalność w życiu i misji Kościoła*, op. cit., No. 6.

votes much space to explaining the grace of the sacraments. However, he places special importance on the Eucharist. It is the Eucharist that is the expression of God's overflowing love for people. In the Eucharist the being receives the incarnate Creator, not just his form, not just by the power of faith, but in actual reality. The synodal questions in the *Vademecum* concerning liturgical celebration refer directly to the translation of participation in the sacraments into daily life. How do prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire and direct our common life and mission in our community? How do they inspire major decisions?⁵⁶ Koźmiński notes that Lord Jesus summarised all His virtues in the Holy Communion. Therefore, the one who receives Holy Communion practices His virtues. It is there that humility of mind, obedience to God's will and to the Church, our gratitude and love are shown. Receiving Holy Communion is, as it were, a protest against evil and sin that insult God; it is a manifestation, adoration and imitation of Christ⁵⁷. The Eucharist gives the believer the opportunity to participate in the atonement of Jesus Christ, who offered a "once for all" atoning sacrifice for everybody⁵⁸. In the celebration of the Eucharist, Christ includes us in his prayer and makes us partakers of his sacrifice, so that we become active with Him and through Him; we participate in His actions and His sacrifice together⁵⁹.

Where are we headed?

The Preparatory Document for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops explains that evangelisation and the message of salvation would not be understood without Jesus' openness to all listeners. The Gospels point to the crowd that followed Jesus, sometimes not leaving Him for a second in the hope of a sign of salvation⁶⁰. He welcomed everyone and listened to the desires of every person: women, sinners, lepers, the rejected, children. With His attitude towards those people, He wanted to show the universality of salvation, excluding no one. Koźmiński notes that the great of this world do not like to deal with simple peo-

⁵⁶ *Vademecum for the Synod on Synodality*, op. cit., No. 5.3.

⁵⁷ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *O czci wynagradzającej*, op. cit., pp. 163-164.

⁵⁸ Fr Honorat, worshipping the Holy Eucharist, links his piety with the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and with Devotion to the Holy Face. For adorers of the Blessed Sacrament, he has created a special booklet of reflections for the last month before the Great Lent. Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Karnawał dusz pobożnych. Czyli miesiąc eucharystyczny*, Warszawa 1901.

⁵⁹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Eucharystia. Bóg blisko nas*, red. S. O. Horn, V. Pfnür, trans. M. Rodkiewicz, Kraków 2005, p. 53.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Preparatory Document for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 07.09.2021, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2021/09/07/210907a.html> [accessed on 10.01.2022], No. 18.

ple, because they cannot understand them. Christ acted differently, He paid attention to the little ones, to the simple people and to children. Rejecting His own omnipotence, power and majesty, He became a child and a little one⁶¹. Jesus' attitude shows people of all times that every person is important and everyone is called to communion with God.

The themes of the Synod are specific, referring to the practical sphere of the Church's life. No specific doctrinal problem to be solved was defined. The synodal documents seem to miss an important point that every believer should remember. The Synod stresses the importance of walking together, but it does not remind us where we are actually heading and for what purpose we are making our efforts in life. As the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* points out, the purpose of the life of the People of God "is the kingdom of God, which has been begun by God Himself on earth, and which is to be further extended until it is brought to perfection by Him at the end of time, when Christ, our life, shall appear"⁶².

Honorat points out that the question of the purpose of man's creation is the same as the question: what is man's happiness? Both questions are pertinent and demonstrate the truth that happiness can only be found in fulfilling one's vocation and achieving the purpose of creation. The Triune God, as a being originating from Himself, finds His happiness in knowing Himself through the Son, the image that is consubstantial with God the Father, and in loving Himself through the Holy Spirit, uniting Father and Son. Man, on the other hand, originating from God, cannot find happiness in himself, but in turning to his own beginning, that is, in knowing God, in loving Him and in giving himself completely to Him until he is united with Him both here and in eternity⁶³. Christ wants temporal and eternal happiness for us, although we often imagine it differently. He wants man to faithfully pursue the purpose for which he was created, to honour, love and serve God, and in this way to ensure true happiness for himself. There are people, Honorat notes, who think that even evading all this they can find happiness in following the world and its pleasures. This is a dead end. There is no happiness and salvation except in faith in Christ, in listening to the Church and in living according to the principles set out in the Gospel. As the Saviour says: "the one who does not gather with Me scatters (Matt. 12:30)"⁶⁴.

⁶¹ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. II, p. 335.

⁶² Sobór Watykański II, *Konstytucja dogmatyczna o Kościele "Lumen gentium"*, in: Sobór Watykański II, *Konstytucje, dekryty, deklaracje*, red. M. Przybył, Poznań 2002, No. 9.

⁶³ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. IV, op. cit., pp. 468-469.

⁶⁴ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Co Polsce i całej Europie dziś potrzeba (Fragmenty. Rękopis: AWP, II, C, 24)*, compiled by J. Pyrek, K. A. Bławdziewicz, "Wspólnota Honoracka. Pismo Rodziny Honorackiej" 1(2018)19, pp. 13-14.

Contemporary man, including Christians, in his pursuit of the demands of the world, does not often think about the end of his life on earth. Historical analyses indicate that attitudes towards death have changed considerably over the past centuries. The direction of these changes can be broadly described as the displacement of death from social consciousness and the topic progressively becoming more taboo. This attitude is particularly influenced by the development of science and the progressive secularisation of life, which weaken the impact of religious interpretations of death. Traditional rites of passage are also beginning to disappear; death is beginning to be treated not as a transition from one state of existence to another, but as an end and a transition into nothingness. Death is becoming an increasingly difficult fact to accept, carefully avoided in conversation and even in thought⁶⁵. We fear death because it is the manifestation of our abandonment by God, it is humanly permeated with the fear of nothingness and the absence of life and love. In death we experience the loss of worldly life, the loss of meaning. In this transition, we should imitate Christ. He Himself accepted all the bitterness of death, not only the physical suffering and the weakness of the spiritual powers, but also the abandonment by the Father⁶⁶. Thanks to Christ, death has taken on a double form: on the one hand it is still a judgment on the loss of God, and on the other it is a surrender to immeasurable Love⁶⁷.

This is also an issue that the Universal Synod should confront in order to renew a healthy interpretation of death and life after death in the consciousness of Christians. Standing on the side of truth in an age of consumerism and escape from suffering is always a challenge. The Church should openly proclaim that death is the end of man's pilgrimage, but it is not annihilation; it is the key to the question of who man actually is. At the moment of transition (material death), the essence of humanity is fulfilled⁶⁸. As Koźmiński reminds us, he who has a living faith in God's promises knows that death is the beginning of eternal life, trusts in the merits of Jesus Christ and expects salvation through His mercy⁶⁹. In the Heavenly Fatherland we will see, love and praise God, we will see the delightful and beautiful Face of the Divine King⁷⁰. The greatest happiness in heaven will come

⁶⁵ Cf. A. Ostrowska, *Przemiany postaw wobec śmierci*, "Medycyna Paliatywna w Praktyce" 10(2016)2, p. 42.

⁶⁶ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. IV, op. cit., p. 284.

⁶⁷ Cf. G. L. Müller, *Katholische Dogmatik. Für Studium und Praxis der Theologie*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 1995, p. 557.

⁶⁸ Cf. A. M. Krąpiec, *Człowiek*, in: *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, red. A. Maryniarczyk, Vol. II, Lublin 2001, p. 385.

⁶⁹ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. III: *Opowiadanie o miłości Bożej w cierpieniach Jezusa*, Włocławek 1910, p. 284.

⁷⁰ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Okaż nam Oblicze Twoje. Nabożeństwo wynagradzające do Oblicza Pańskiego, do Imienia Bożego, niektórych Tajemnic Świętych*, Warszawa 1913, pp. 134-135.

from seeing and being close to God, who is the highest and infinite good. This is eternal life, in which we shall know God in His abyss of love, which on earth He has revealed only in part. All the relationships we had with Him will be renewed in Heaven in an ineffable and supreme way⁷¹.

Conclusion

“Walking together”, Pope Francis teaches, “is the constitutive way of the Church; the figure that enables us to interpret reality with the eyes and heart of God; the condition for following the Lord Jesus and being servants of life in this wounded time”⁷². On the one hand, the Pope’s words summarise the issues covered by the 16th Universal Synod and, on the other, they point to a timeless task for the members of Christ’s Church. The Gospel has been preached for over two thousand years and thus its impact remains constant despite the passage of time. The attempt of the theological evaluation of the present synodal challenges based on the teachings of Blessed Honorat Koźmiński indicated that today too every man is called to be the witness of God and His love for mankind, whether in the lay or clerical state. God calls each of us to follow Him in order to take part in His work of Redemption by imitating Him.

The article shows that synodality is expressed in communion, participation and mission. The Eucharist is its source and summit. It is in the Eucharist that we are incorporated into the sacrificial act of Jesus and into Him. It is in the Eucharist that the ongoing process of community building, begun by the Holy Spirit in the faithful already during baptism, takes place. And the words spoken at the end of each Mass, *Ite missa est*, make us aware of the need and duty to be sent to the world in which we live and work.

The value of the sacraments, of community, of participation in the Redemption was repeatedly emphasised by Fr Honorat Koźmiński in his works. As a particular form of the spirituality of communion, he pointed to the atonement to which all the baptised are called. It is a truth that is timeless and always new, because reparation, which consists above all in reciprocating God’s love, is an opportunity that He has given us and to which He constantly calls us. Reparation can become a way of life and a help in times of crisis of faith, and thus provide an answer to the question posed by the Synod: how do we walk together? Everyone is invited to participate in the Synod, because God has decided to gather in the Church all believers in Jesus Christ. Leading her to the truth in community and in ministry, He equips her with all the necessary gifts and charisms, keeps her by

⁷¹ Cf. H. Koźmiński, *Powieść nad powieściami*, Vol. IV, op. cit., pp. 157-159.

⁷² Cf. International Theological Commission, *Synodalność w życiu i misji Kościoła*, op. cit., No. 34.

the power of his gospel in everlasting youth, constantly renews her and leads her to form a union with the Bridegroom⁷³. The call to “walk together”, which must not be forgotten, points to the goal of the pilgrimage of God’s people, which is the eternal communion of man with God.

Wyzwania synodalne. Próba teologicznej oceny inspirowanej nauką bł. Honorata Koźmińskiego

Streszczenie

Temat artykułu wpisuje się w problematykę teologii współczesnej z ujęciem teologii świętych. W Kościele katolickim rozpoczął się XVI Synod Powszechny, który ma na celu odnowę duszpasterską, nawrócenie duchowe oraz rozeznanie wspólnotowe i apostołskie pewnych kierunków duszpasterskich. Kościół stoi przed zadaniem rozpoznania znaków czasu i zastosowania odpowiednich środków do znalezienia jak najlepszych rozwiązań dla współczesnego życia wierzących. Odnowa ta wymaga uruchomienia procesów konsultacji z całym Ludem Bożym, jak również czerpania z Tradycji i z doświadczeń chrześcijan. Artykuł czerpie inspiracje z dokumentów synodalnych, które są konfrontowane z nauczaniem bł. Honorata Koźmińskiego. Ten dziewiętnastowieczny zakonnik był swego rodzaju odnowicielem życia duchowego w swej epoce. Jego teologia była oparta na słowach Pisma Świętego i tekstach autorytetów Kościoła, które odnosił do ówczesnych wyzwań Kościoła. Także i dziś możemy czerpać mądrość z jego dzieł, ponieważ potrafił on doskonale odczytywać Ewangelię, interpretować ją w kluczu *kairos* i wprowadzać w życie duchowe i duszpasterskie Kościoła. Celem artykułu jest ukazanie wyzwań obecnego Synodu i jego tematyki, uwzględniając znaki czasu oraz próbę oceny teologicznej inspirowanej osobą bł. Honorata Koźmińskiego i jego ponadczasowym nauczaniem.

Słowa kluczowe

synod powszechny, synodalność, bł. Honorat Koźmiński, komunია, Eucharystia, wspólnota

Synodal Challenges. An attempt at a theological evaluation inspired by the teachings of Blessed Honorat Koźmiński

Summary

The theme of the article fits into the problem of contemporary theology with its take on the theology of the saints. The 16th Universal Synod began in the Catholic Church with the aim of pastoral renewal, spiritual conversion and community and apostolic discernment of certain pastoral directions. The Church is faced with the task of recognizing the signs of the times and applying appropriate means to find the best possible solutions for the contemporary life of believers. This renewal re-

⁷³ Cf. Sobór Watykański II, *Konstytucja dogmatyczna o Kościele “Lumen gentium”*, op. cit., No. 3.5.

quires launching processes of consultation with the entire People of God, as well as drawing on Tradition and the experience of Christians. The article draws inspiration from the synodal documents which are confronted with the teaching of Blessed Honorat Koźmiński. This 19th century monk was a kind of a renewer of spiritual life in his era. His theology was always based on the Holy Scriptures and authorities of the Church, which he related to the challenges of the Church at that time. Even today, we can draw wisdom from his works because he was able to read the Gospel perfectly, interpret it in the key of *kairos* and bring it into the spiritual and pastoral life of the Church. The aim of this article is to present the challenges of the present Synod and its theme, taking into account the signs of the times and an attempt at a theological evaluation inspired by the person of Blessed Honorat Koźmiński and his timeless teaching.

Keywords

The Universal Synod, synodality, Blessed Honorat Koźmiński, communion, Eucharist, community

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