



REV. DARIUSZ LIPIEC

THE JOHN PAUL II CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF LUBLIN

DLIPIEC@KUL.PL

ORCID: 0000-0002-8890-2062

## THE PASTOR AS THE FATHER OF THE PARISH

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/TiCz.2024.003>

**Abstract.** The aim of this article is to present the pastor as a father. The need to act as a father to individual parishioners and to the parish community stems from the Church's teaching. The fatherhood of a priest is based on theological grounds (mainly patrilogical). It follows from the inner relations of the Holy Trinity – of the Father with the Son and with the Holy Spirit – as well as from the relations of the Father with people. The need for the pastor to carry out his ministry in a paternal way also results from the current pastoral conditions. These consist in the believers' expectations that the pastor should be in a personal relationship with them in a paternal way and from their need to build Christian communities upon direct relationships between their different members.

**Keywords:** pastor, parish, spiritual fatherhood, pastoral care, parishioners.

**Streszczenie.** Proboszcz jako ojciec parafii. Celem artykułu jest ukazanie proboszcza jako ojca. Konieczność występowania w roli ojca wobec poszczególnych parafian i całej wspólnoty parafialnej wynika z nauczania Kościoła. Ojcostwo kapłana jest osadzone na fundamencie teologicznym, głównie patrylogicznym. Wpływa ono z wewnętrznych relacji w obrębie Trójcy Świętej, czyli relacji Ojca z Synem i Duchem Świętym, a także z relacji Ojca z ludźmi. Potrzeba wypełniania przez proboszcza powierzonej mu posługi na sposób ojcowski jest również podyktowana bieżącymi uwarunkowaniami duszpasterskimi. Współcześni wierni oczekują, że proboszcz będzie pozostawać z nimi w osobistej relacji o charakterze ojcowskim, a także wyrażają potrzebę budowania wspólnot chrześcijańskich na bazie bezpośrednich relacji między ich poszczególnymi członkami.

**Słowa** kluczowe: proboszcz, parafia, ojcostwo duchowe, duszpasterstwo, parafianie.

The *Directory for the Ministry and the Life of Priests* states that “the ministry of the priest is . . . the ministry of fatherhood. Through his dedication to souls many are those generated to the new life in Christ. . . . Moreover, on the supernatural level as well as the natural level, the mission of fatherhood ends not with birth, but extends to and embraces all life long.”<sup>1</sup> The fatherhood of a priest is expressed in two important functions of fatherhood, which are calling a young man to life and educating him by accompanying him on his life’s journey. The life of the priest aims at the transmission of supernatural life and at Christian formation. Among priests, particular attention should be paid to the fatherhood of pastors. According to the Code of Canon Law, “the pastor (*parochus*) is the proper pastor (*pastor*) of the parish entrusted to him, exercising the pastoral care of the community committed to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop in whose ministry of Christ he has been called to share, so that for that same community he carries out the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing.”<sup>2</sup> The pastor is sent by the bishop to fulfill his fatherhood, which is both an official function and a deeply internal function, a theological one, with its particular nature stemming from the existential closeness of the faithful who are entrusted to him and among whom he lives. The documents of the Church cited above also indicate that the pastor’s fatherhood applies both to individual parishioners and to the whole community of the parish.

First, the article will present the theological basis of the pastor’s fatherhood, and then the forms of its fulfillment in relation to each individual parishioner and to the whole community. This research is based on the contemporary teaching of the Catholic Church and on selected studies concerning the issue in question. The research procedure is mainly based on the monographic method. The aim of this article is to present in a holistic way the issue of fatherhood: its theological basis and the need

---

<sup>1</sup> Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and the Life of Priests: New Edition* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), sec. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Code of Canon Law*, Vatican website, January 25, 1983, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_lib2-cann460-572\\_en.html#TITLE\\_III](https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib2-cann460-572_en.html#TITLE_III), can. 519.

for and the current forms of its fulfillment. The author also used the content analysis and document analysis methods, and during the editing of the text, he applied the description method.<sup>3</sup>

## 1. THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF THE PASTOR'S FATHERHOOD

The pastor's fatherhood is rooted in the life of the Holy Trinity. It results from the love that is the fulcrum and principle of the life of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity; it is rooted in Their mutual relations. John Paul II wrote that "it is within the Church's mystery, as a mystery of Trinitarian communion in missionary tension, that every Christian identity is revealed, and likewise the specific identity of the priest and his ministry. Indeed, the priest, by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the sacrament of orders, is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is configured in a special way as head and shepherd of his people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world. . . . Through the priesthood which arises from the depths of the ineffable mystery of God, that is, from the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's gift of unity, the priest sacramentally enters into communion with the bishop and with other priests in order to serve the People of God who are the Church and to draw all mankind to Christ."<sup>4</sup> The Pope's teaching points to the Holy Trinity as the source of the identity of priests, including the identity of pastors, and as the source of their mission.

The previous Ecumenical Council's teaching with regard to the ministry of a priest – on which the Pope's teaching is based – indicates that the priest and his ministry are rooted in the internal life of the Holy Trinity. It points to the relations between the Persons of the Holy Trinity and, through that, to the "relational" nature of the identity of the priest's min-

---

<sup>3</sup> See Ryszard Kamiński, *Metodyka przygotowania prac promocyjnych z teologii pastoralnej* (Siedlce: Unitas, 2017), 89–94.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, March 25, 1992, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031992\\_pastores-dabo-vobis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html), sec. 12.

istry. The documents of the Council contain information about the relationship between Jesus Christ and a priest who participates in His priesthood; between the priest and the Holy Spirit who grants the power and enlightenment to pursue the priest's vocation and mission. The teaching of the Church also indicates the patrillogical foundations of the identity and mission of the priest, including the pastor's fatherhood in the parish.<sup>5</sup>

The pastor's fatherhood is rooted in his mission, which has its origin in the mission of Jesus Christ. Christ Himself, being the Second Person of the Holy Trinity and the Word of the Eternal Father, was sent by the Father to save the world. By participating in the mission of Jesus Christ, pastors participate in the mission given to Christ by His Father. What became the content of Jesus's mission is therefore the content of the priests' mission. In consequence, their mission comes from the Father, and its accomplishment consists in the fulfillment of the will of the Father who sent His Son and thus also His disciples.

The mission of Jesus Christ aimed at leading all people to the Father, but through their sins, they were separated from Him. Jesus led people to the Father by proclaiming the Good News about salvation, by gathering the disciples, and by giving the gift of Himself as a sacrifice for His Father on the cross. Guiding the faithful and those who are far from God towards an encounter with the Father is one of the main tasks of the pastor's mission. The Second Vatican Council indicates that this is done through proclaiming the word of God and through the ministry of sanctification – mainly by ministering the sacraments and gathering everybody in a community.<sup>6</sup> The word of God, that is, the word of the Father is the source of faith. Christian faith, meant as a bond with God, is born through the personal meeting with Him in His word.<sup>7</sup> The genuinely interpreted

---

<sup>5</sup> Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*," Vatican website, November 21, 1964, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html), sec. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Second Vatican Council, "Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*," Vatican website, December 7, 1965, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_presbyterorum-ordinis\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html), sec. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, apostolic exhortation, Vatican website, September 30, 2010, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20100930\\_verbum-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html), secs. 20–21.

and transmitted word of God is the source of faith which is existential and which concerns the whole man and his life. Proclaiming the word leads man to getting to know the truth about God, about the world, and about himself. Getting to know the truth leads to arousing love towards God and towards man.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, we can argue that pastors who proclaim the word of God are in a way fathers to those who receive it. They create believers, they become fathers in the Father to whom they lead the people who were entrusted to them.

God's word is causative. Benedict XVI taught that "in salvation history there is no separation between what God *says* and what he *does*. His word appears as alive and active (cf. Heb 4:12). . . . In the liturgical action too, we encounter his word which accomplishes what it says."<sup>9</sup> The performance of the liturgy is the continuation of the fulfillment of the fatherhood role by the pastor for the parishioners who have been entrusted to him. Bringing them to an encounter with God by proclaiming the word helps them become deeply united with Him in the liturgy and prayer. The administration of sacraments and the prayer of the pastor are also vertical in nature: they help to build God's Kingdom on earth and the civilization of love among people. Therefore, we can repeat after Benedict XVI that "by educating the People of God to discover the performative character of God's word in the liturgy, we will help them to recognize his activity in salvation history and in their individual lives."<sup>10</sup>

The celebration of the Eucharist by the pastor has a particular meaning in the fulfillment of the pastor's fatherhood. John Paul II reminded us that "when the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord's death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and 'the work of our redemption is carried out.' This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only *after he had left us a means of sharing in it* as if we had been present there. Each member of the faithful can thus

---

<sup>8</sup> Francis, *Lumen fidei*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, June 29, 2013, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130629\\_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html), secs. 23–28.

<sup>9</sup> Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, sec. 53.

<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, sec. 53.

take part in it and inexhaustibly gain its fruits.”<sup>11</sup> The faithful are united with God when they receive Christ’s Body and Blood in Holy Communion. The Sacrifice of the Eucharist itself is to lead to the meeting of man with God and, through participating in the feasting at the Lord’s table, provides the faithful with the genuine Body and Blood of the Savior. Thus, they begin a new life from the Father, according to Jesus’s words: “Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me” (John 6:57). The pastor who is celebrating the Holy Mass becomes a collaborator of God – the Life Giver who gave His Son as the nourishment for this world.

The “paternal function” of the pastor is fulfilled in gathering the faithful into a community and in leading them to the Father. By holding the office of the pastor, the priest accomplishes a hierarchical mission that is at the same time a service.<sup>12</sup> To hold the ecclesial offices is to fulfill the paternal love of the father and the pastoral love of Christ the Good Shepherd. Thus, it is also a demonstration of the attitude of service of Christ the Servant to the faithful entrusted to Him and to those who have moved away from God. As He gathered the disciples, Christ prayed for them to become united and led them to the Father to offer them to Him as His property. By following Christ and acting in cooperation with Him, one gathers the people into one family, “the fold of God,” in order to bring each and every one to the Father. This paternal concern of the pastor for the faithful and for the unbelievers also reflects the love of the Father who wants to have His children close to Him in this life and in eternity.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, encyclical letter, Vatican website, April 17, 2003, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_20030417\\_eccl-de-euch.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_eccl-de-euch.html), sec. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, Vatican website, August 4, 2002, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccclergy\\_doc\\_20020804\\_istruzione-presbitero\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc_con_ccclergy_doc_20020804_istruzione-presbitero_en.html), secs. 7–8.

<sup>13</sup> Francis, *Third Meditation: The Good Odour of Christ and the Light of His Mercy*, spiritual retreat given by His Holiness Pope Francis, Vatican website, June 2, 2016, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/june/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160602\\_giubileo-sacerdoti-terza-meditazione.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/june/documents/papa-francesco_20160602_giubileo-sacerdoti-terza-meditazione.html), sec. 6.

## 2. THE PASTOR AS THE FATHER OF HIS PARISHIONERS

The pastoral concern that aims at leading people to communion with God involves all the faithful who are formally gathered as a community, as well as those who live in the parish. Furthermore, it also applies to those who are visitors of the parish – such as, for example, family members of deceased parishioners who come to settle matters connected with the funeral or guests at holiday celebrations and family gatherings. In practice, the pastor's mission concerns all the people whom he meets in his parish as well as those who are in a way connected with the parish but do not contact the pastor in person. This means that the pastor's paternal care extends to believers and unbelievers, to those who distance themselves from God and from the Church, and to followers of different religions. By establishing contacts and developing relationships with every person who should be embraced by his paternal care, the pastor establishes himself as a man of dialogue.

Pope Francis points to an attitude of openness that is necessary for contemporary Christians to establish and lead a dialogue with the world.<sup>14</sup> In the case of the pastor, it is an internal attitude that results from his openness to people and from his willingness to be with them, which is the first step on his way to a dialogue with those around him. The ability to adopt such an attitude of openness comes from the qualifications which he possesses. This mainly concerns traits which are conducive to establishing and developing relationships, such as emotional maturity, empathy, and consistency in action, as well as moral features such as justice, goodness, honesty, and many others. There is also a need for intellectual formation which involves both theological knowledge and knowledge of the contemporary world, including the ongoing processes and their influence on various social groups. A contemporary pastor is expected to understand the people who ask him for help or advice, the specific nature of their lives, and the origin of their current spiritual life; he should be able to properly find remedies to their needs and expectations.

---

<sup>14</sup> Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, apostolic exhortation, Vatican website, November 24, 2013, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), sec. 20.

Establishing a dialogue and developing relations involves the acceptance of everybody whom the pastor meets. Acceptance means accepting people the way they are. In pastoral practice, this also applies to those who have distanced themselves from God or those who have never been in a close relationship with Him, those who doubt, and those who are prejudiced against or reluctant towards the Church. This need for acceptance concerns all people regardless of why they are in a given religious condition. Their reservations about Christianity may result from their personal negative experiences or from the influence of those around them: the family or the society.

Accepting a person the way he or she is, with his or her personal history, does not mean accepting all of his or her views and actions. The dialogue which the pastor leads is a dialogue of salvation that aims to lead a person to meeting God and to deepening his or her personal bond with Him. People perceive the pastor from the perspective of God's Revelation, and it is in this light that human views and deeds are judged. In practice, this also means that he should not close his mind to people whose views and attitudes are more or less inconsistent with those based on the Gospel and should not refrain from establishing a dialogue with them or simply break it. The pastor must not lead a dialogue of salvation only with those who are open to God's word and with the ecclesial community; he is expected to engage in such a dialogue with everyone in his environment. This follows from the universal call to salvation because Jesus gave His life for the salvation of all people.

The pastor's paternal concern for the salvation of the people to whom he has been sent indicates that God Himself is the essence of that dialogue. Pope Francis highlights the fact that contemporary people should be introduced to the Merciful God who looks at man with His paternal love and who invites man to a communion with Him. It is the task of the clergy to lead people to meet the Merciful God who is able to face man's poverty. This poverty is meant in multiple ways: as material poverty and as moral poverty that consists in committing sins.<sup>15</sup> According to the

---

<sup>15</sup> Francis, "Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, Cathedral of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, Palo," Vatican website, January 17, 2015, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150117\\_srilan-ka-filippine-cattedrale-palo.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150117_srilan-ka-filippine-cattedrale-palo.html).



Pope, the contemporary man should be introduced to the Merciful God who looks at him with concern and who holds him dearly. God should be presented as full of mercy for those who suffer poverty and for those who distance themselves from Him through their unordered lives.

Today, the doctrine of the Church highlights the fact that the contemporary teaching of pastors should focus on kerygmatic preaching. Contemporary people, the majority of whom are de-Christianized, mainly need proclamation about Christ and about the salvation offered by Him on the cross. It is necessary to lead people to a personal meeting with the Father in their life on earth so that they can follow Him to a meeting in eternity. Paraenetic teaching, which used to be a major part of the pastor's preaching, is less and less accepted by contemporary parishioners who have been raised in a more secularized environment.

The fatherhood of the pastor is contained in the fatherhood of God and leads to it. In leading people to the Father, the aim is to ensure that they ultimately meet Him in eternity. This eschatological aim is anticipated in the Eucharist, the celebration and consumption of which is a pledge of the future meeting with God in unity. The act of receiving the Eucharist is called Communion and is a form of expressing and building a bond with the Father. The pastor's goal is first to lead as many people as possible (all of them, if possible) to a meeting with God in the Eucharist and then to help them live a systematic Eucharistic life. Because there are various stages in the "closeness" of each parishioner towards God, accompanying them on their way to unite with Him will always require an individualized approach. This individualized character is mainly noticed in the preparation of children and their parents for the First Holy Communion. Syllabuses, despite being adapted to the current religious conditions of the diocese, require further adaptation not only to the specific nature of each particular parish, but also, within the same group, to each particular family or person. Adaptation to the needs of the parish, and often to those of each individual parishioner, is a task that the pastor must complete in order to make his parental care for the development of Eucharistic life even more effective.

The problem of adapting the care for participation in Eucharistic celebrations and reception of Holy Communion also concerns other parishioners because their level of engagement is varied. In all cases, it involves awakening and deepening the desire to develop a personal bond

with God through the Eucharist. This requires individual conversations or conversations in small groups, including formation groups. Such conversations aim at helping one understand the Eucharist and its meaning in the life of a Christian and motivating one to develop a bond with God through the Eucharist.

The eucharistic education of parishioners leads to a meeting with God in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. More and more often, contemporary believers depart from God through their sinful loves. The promotion of sin in the public space, including the portrayal of freedom as being free from moral principles, results in the adoption of a secular lifestyle by some Christians. In many cases, this lifestyle leads to certain complications in their personal lives, including marital and family life as well as social life, causing a sense of life failure, loss, and other kinds of distress. While many believers decide to come back to their close relationship with God, some of them are unable to make such a decision independently, which entails the need for external help. The pastor is the person who can provide this kind of assistance.<sup>16</sup>

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is becoming more and more important in the contemporary world and therefore requires more care and attention from the pastor. The conversations held in the confessional should satisfy the needs of the penitents, even those of which they are not fully aware. Pastors should be careful to avoid superficiality and cursory insight in ministering this sacrament; they should devote sufficient time to this sacrament depending on the needs of the penitents. In the face of the ongoing secularization, regular confession and spiritual direction gain a particular importance. The fatherhood of the pastor is then manifested as a spiritual parenthood that leads to a deep union with the Father.

In the context of leading parishioners to union with the Father, the pastoral conversation becomes even more important, and calls are being made to change the formal meetings with the pastor so that they become more pastoral in form. This mainly concerns conversations in the parish office as a place to which believers, unbelievers, and those who distance themselves from the Church come for various reasons. Such meetings

---

<sup>16</sup> See Mieczysław Polak, "Duszpasterstwo miłosierdzia. Miłosierdzie jako paradygmat pastoralnej misji Kościoła," *Teologia Praktyczna* 15 (2014): 14–17.

make it possible to establish contacts with people who do not meet the pastor on a daily basis. Here, they can better interact with each other, which makes it possible to deepen their relationship in a more pastoral way.<sup>17</sup>

What is more, the role of spontaneous contacts and informal conversations is also highlighted. Due to the specific nature of the pastor, who is perceived as a clergyman and a representative of God, the attention of the interlocutors will spontaneously be drawn to the supernatural reality. While this perception of the pastor is not always expressed in a kind and tactful way, it makes it possible to start a conversation about God and to direct the interlocutor towards a personal relationship with the Father.

### 3. THE PASTOR'S FATHERHOOD AND THE PARISH COMMUNITY

The pastor's fatherhood is also fulfilled for the benefit of a community of believers. In theological literature, the parish is compared to the family. Parishioners are a community of people who are joined by bonds of faith. They are supposed to live according to the principles of the Gospel, and their unity should be enlivened by Christian love. Within the model of the parish as a family, its members are to be brothers and sisters to one another, and the pastor should be perceived as the father.<sup>18</sup>

The pastor's main goal as the father of the family is to bring the parishioners together and make them a community of people. Interactions with individual believers aim at deepening their relationships not only with God but also with other parishioners. It has been highlighted that interactions between pastors and their parishioners are often occasional, resulting from life's necessities or from certain family or ecclesial celebrations, especially the more important ones. The fact that some pastors engage in certain pastoral interactions with parishioners not for the sake of the latter's spiritual good but to improve statistics concerning pastoral activity, or for other less important reasons, is a problem in some parishes.

---

<sup>17</sup> See Wojciech Rzeszowski, "Kancelaria miejscem trudnych spotkań," in *Sztuka bycia księdzem. Poradnik*, ed. Józef Augustyn (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2010), 387–396.

<sup>18</sup> See Ryszard Kamiński, *Parafia. Przemiany w strukturze i funkcjach parafii* (Siedlce: Unitas, 2023), 83–85.

There are pastors who do not treat their parishioners subjectively as their children or as partners in the work of salvation and instead feel superior, using parishioners as a means for the attainment of their external goals. It is therefore necessary for the pastor to build the relationship with his parishioners in such a way that they consider themselves as recipients of his pastoral concern. His emotional positive attitude will make them perceive his concern as paternal concern.<sup>19</sup>

Building relationships between parishioners is a major challenge. Such relationships between people in parishes are mainly built upon kinship, neighborliness, work, school, and more; it is rarely the parish itself that acts as the basis for relationship building. Exceptions include religious associations, which, as venues for gatherings, contribute to satisfying psychological and spiritual needs, offer formation, and provide opportunities for the apostolate and social engagement. Some parishioners perceive themselves as being part of the group who take part in the liturgy and other parish events. There are also a significant number of parishioners who know one another. However, there are no bonds which could connect them and become the basis for building the community, especially one like a family.

Another problem in the Polish reality is the social divisions that tend to be increasing. They are often rooted in political affiliations, leading to far-reaching polarization of views and sometimes even resentment and hostility. The role of the pastor as a father is to help in reconciliation. His task is to start the process of reconciliation between the arguing parties, bringing out their good will and guiding them to mutual understanding and to building relations based on mutual respect.<sup>20</sup>

Another important task of a pastor is social engagement. This type of engagement aims at building a “civilization of love” in the local community and involves various activities associated with participation in the community’s life. Cooperation with local governments and social organizations aims at the multiplication of the common good because parishioners are at the same time members of the local community. In this case, the common good is not connected with mutual benefit but with the spir-

---

<sup>19</sup> See Adam Przybecki, *Stać się Kościołem słowa, prorocstwa i dialogu. Impulsy dla polskiego duszpasterstwa* (Poznań: UAM Wydział Teologiczny, 2013), 109–112.

<sup>20</sup> See Jan Wal, *Dekalog dialogu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Czuwajmy, 2015), 47–62.

itual and material culture built on evangelical values, mainly on brotherly love. Thanks to such collaboration, the pastor can become an authority in the local environment – also for those who distance themselves from the Church.

The “civilization of love” is also built by organizing parish-based cultural and recreational events,<sup>21</sup> which attract many people as participants and help engage the more active parishioners and members of the local community in organizational activities. Thanks to such events, the parish can become a sign of unity in a society, and the pastor can be seen as the intermediary. By organizing such events and actively participating in them, the pastor can be better known as a man rather than merely as an official. Many people perceive the pastor as an official or an officer, others see him as a specialist in spiritual issues who is somehow detached from reality. Building a relationship on the grounds of cultural events contributes to the fulfillment of the pastor’s mission of fatherhood towards the people who are connected with the parish in various ways.

## CONCLUSION

The requirement to hold the pastor’s office in a paternal way stems from the documents of the Church. The latest Popes have highlighted the need for a personal relationship between the pastor and his parishioners and the need to build a parish community that comprises all the residents, both those with a religious zeal and those who distance themselves from God and from the Church. The need for the pastor to be a father to his parish and his parishioners also results from the current pastoral conditions. The clergy have lost some of the authority which they used to hold by virtue of being ordained and holding pastoral offices. For an increasing number of people, priests’ authority is now based on the human aspect of their existence and activity. In the context of the current pastoral challenges, the attitude of the pastor towards those under his ministry is gaining ever greater importance. The theological concept of the parish indicates that a paternal attitude is the most proper one when it comes to

---

<sup>21</sup> See Bogusław Drożdż, *Posługa społeczna Kościoła* (Legnica: Biblioteka WSD Diecezji Legnickiej, 2009), 345–392.

fulfilling the salvific service for each believer and for the community of the faithful.

## REFERENCES

- Benedict XVI. *Verbum Domini*. Apostolic Exhortation. Vatican Website. September 30, 2010, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20100930\\_verbum-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html).
- Code of Canon Law*. Vatican Website. January 25, 1983, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic\\_lib2-cann460-572\\_en.html#TITLE\\_III](https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib2-cann460-572_en.html#TITLE_III).
- Congregation for the Clergy. *Directory for the Ministry and the Life of Priests: New Edition*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013.
- Congregation for the Clergy. *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*. Vatican Website. August 4, 2002, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc\\_con\\_cclergy\\_doc\\_20020804\\_istruzione-presbitero\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_20020804_istruzione-presbitero_en.html).
- Drożdż, Bogusław. *Posługa społeczna Kościoła*. Legnica: Biblioteka WSD Diecezji Legnickiej, 2009.
- Francis. "Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, Cathedral of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, Palo." Vatican Website. January 17, 2015, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150117\\_sri-lanka-filippine-cattedrale-palo.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150117_sri-lanka-filippine-cattedrale-palo.html).
- Francis. *Evangelii gaudium*. Apostolic Exhortation. Vatican Website. November 24, 2013, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html).
- Francis. *Lumen fidei*. Encyclical Letter. Vatican Website. June 29, 2013, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130629\\_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html).
- Francis. *Third Meditation: The Good Odour of Christ and the Light of His Mercy*. Spiritual retreat given by His Holiness Pope Francis. Vatican Website. June 2, 2016, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/june/documents/papa-francesco\\_20160602\\_giubileo-sacerdoti-terza-meditazione.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/june/documents/papa-francesco_20160602_giubileo-sacerdoti-terza-meditazione.html).
- John Paul II. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Encyclical Letter. Vatican Website. April 17, 2003, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_20030417\\_eccl-de-euch.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_eccl-de-euch.html).
- John Paul II. *Pastores dabo vobis*. Encyclical Letter. Vatican Website. March 25, 1992, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031992\\_pastores-dabo-vobis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html).
- Kamiński, Ryszard. *Metodyka przygotowania prac promocyjnych z teologii pastoralnej*. Siedlce: Unitas, 2017.
- Kamiński, Ryszard. *Parafia. Przemiany w strukturze i funkcjach parafii*. Siedlce: Unitas, 2023.

- Polak, Mieczysław. "Duszpasterstwo miłosierdzia. Miłosierdzie jako paradygmat pastoralnej misji Kościoła." *Teologia Praktyczna* 15 (2014): 7–21.
- Przybecki, Adam. *Stać się Kościołem słowa, proroctwa i dialogu. Impulsy dla polskiego duszpasterstwa*. Poznań: UAM Wydział Teologiczny, 2013.
- Rzeszowski, Wojciech. "Kancelaria miejscem trudnych spotkań." In *Sztuka bycia księdzem. Poradnik*, edited by Józef Augustyn, 387–396. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2010.
- Second Vatican Council. "Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis*." Vatican Website. December 7, 1965, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_presbyterorum-ordinis\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html).
- Second Vatican Council. "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*." Vatican Website. November 21, 1964, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html).
- Wal, Jan. *Dekalog dialogu*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Czuwajmy, 2015.