

o. mgr lic. kan. Karol Wielgosz OP
ul. Stolarska 12
31-043 Kraków

From Dogma to Kerygma.

Joseph Ratzinger's/Benedict's XVI theology of Preaching, Evangelisation, and Missions.

Summary

The path from dogma to preaching has become very difficult – wrote Joseph Ratzinger in the first sentence of his book entitled: *Dogma and Preaching*. He continued: *there are no longer any patterns of thought and assumptions that carry the content of dogma into everyday life*. The goal of this thesis is to explore this path, and to search for these patterns.

According to this great theologian, dogma is an interpretation of the Scripture read through the prism of the living faith of the Church. Kerygma is a proclamation of the living Christ which creates an environment of meeting between a human person and God. *Sacred Scripture, read in the light of dogma is a kerygma* – concluded J. Ratzinger. Hence, there is a connection between dogma and kerygma. It may be said, that the way kerygma depends on dogma determines the process of formulation of the theology of preaching, evangelization, and missions.

Missions (sharing the Gospel with those who do not know it yet) are the realization of evangelization (a proclamation of the basics of the Gospel), which is, in turn, a form of preaching (a proclamation of the Gospel in general). Theology, according to Joseph Ratzinger is a methodical, coherent, philosophical way of discovering the truth about God – and in this light – about the world as well. So, the title of this thesis reveals the main idea behind it: All the aspects of the dependency of the kerygma from dogma allow to formulate the theology of preaching, evangelization, and missions.

Discussion about the relationship between dogma and preaching is not only an academic one. It touches the most controversial issues of the life of the Church in modern times such as the relationship between doctrine and pastoral practice, the possibility of receiving God's grace without accepting the truth about God, inculturation, the hermeneutics of the faith, intercultural and inter-religious dialog. All these aspects of the life of the Church are part of the theology of preaching, and all of them contain some difficulties about the path from dogma to preaching. Unfortunately, when these issues are theologically analyzed, the theology of Joseph Ratzinger usually remains forgotten. The goal of this thesis is to prove that the theology of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI contains

many fresh ideas which may help to understand these crucial aspects of the realization of the mission of the Church today, and – what is even more important – provides tools which help to organize them in one theological vision.

In order to realize this goal, statements about preaching, evangelization, missions, dogma, and kerygma were extracted from Ratzinger's theological heritage, then they were confronted with his understanding of the most holy Trinity, the Church, and a person. They were selected according to the hermeneutical key which is personalism. The result of this research is presented on the pages of the thesis summarised here.

The thesis contains three chapters. First is entitled: *God who is preaching the Good News*. In it, the issues about the origin of the Gospel are analyzed. Father is the origin of all. By giving birth to his Son, He proclaims the Eternal Word. By doing so He becomes the first author of the Gospel. His life with the son and the Holy Spirit – the inner life of the Trinity – is a constant dialog (heart-to-heart) of these three Divine Persons. This is not only a model, but the origin, the essence, and the end of all the preaching. God, by the act of creation, his providential presence in the history of the world and incarnation extended this dialog onto his Creation. All are engulfed by it and invited to personally participate in it.

The second chapter is entitled: *The Church which is preaching the Good News*. For Joseph Ratzinger, Church is not autonomous. It is „only” a Body of Christ whose soul is the Holy Spirit of Christ. In this chapter are discussed issues concerning the ways in which Jesus Christ, in/by/for his Church listens to the Father, gives him an answer, and preaches the Gospel. The areas where these actions are realized are liturgy, martyrdom, involvement in developing of the culture.

The third chapter is entitled: *A Christian who is preaching the Good News*. Being the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church as a whole is unable to actualize of the aspects of the dialog which is the life of the Most Holy Trinity *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Hence, it is necessary to present how, according to Joseph Ratzinger, every person is invited by God to listen to his Word, to believe in/through/with him, to answer Him, to proclaim experienced in this way kerygma. Listening to God, answering him, and sharing the joy of the Gospel take place in participating in the liturgy, in conversion in taking responsibility for the Church.

Joseph Ratzinger formulated the theology of preaching, evangelization and missions. He did not create a closed, systematic system of practical theology, but proposed a coherent, organized, opened yet containing all essential parts vision. For him preaching the Gospel does not mean only talking about God. It means, firstly, to listen to Him, giving him a personal answer (heart-to-heart) and allowing him to preach through the life of his faithful. It means to talk, but even more to adore and to participate in Christ's Cross – to speak by silence.

The research presented in this thesis proves that there is a path from dogma to kerygma. It is necessary to find it, if one would like to receive and to preach, not his own gospel, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, ecclesiastical practice depends on the doctrine of the Church and the inculturation does not mean simply an adaptation but rather a conversion. These are the reasons why Joseph Ratzinger's theology of preaching, evangelization, and missions is so needed, interesting, and attractive. It deserves more attention, and certainly could and should be developed.