



You have downloaded a document from  
**RE-BUŚ**  
repository of the University of Silesia in Katowice

**Title:** Eucharistic gathering as the heart of celebrating "the eight day" in a parish

**Author:** Bogdan Biela

**Citation style:** Biela Bogdan. (2012). Eucharistic gathering as the heart of celebrating "the eight day" in a parish. "Studia Pastoralne" (Nr 8 (2012), s. 184-195).



Uznanie autorstwa - Użycie niekomercyjne - Bez utworów zależnych Polska - Licencja ta zezwala na rozpowszechnianie, przedstawianie i wykonywanie utworu jedynie w celach niekomercyjnych oraz pod warunkiem zachowania go w oryginalnej postaci (nie tworzenia utworów zależnych).



UNIwersYTET ŚLĄSKI  
W KATOWICACH



Biblioteka  
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



Ministerstwo Nauki  
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego

**Ks. Bogdan Biela**  
Uniwersytet Śląski  
Wydział Teologiczny

## **EUCCHARISTIC GATHERING AS THE HEART OF CELEBRATING „THE EIGHTH DAY” IN A PARISH**

In his letter on celebrating Sunday, *Dies Domini*, John Paul II emphasised the fact that

many who wish to live in accord with the demands of their faith are being faced with difficult situations in various parts of the world. They live in surroundings which are sometimes decidedly hostile and at other times – more frequently in fact – indifferent and unresponsive to the Gospel message. If believers are not to be overwhelmed, they must be able to count on the support of the Christian community. This is why they must be convinced that it is crucially important for the life of faith that they should come together with others on Sundays to celebrate the Passover of the Lord in the sacrament of the New Covenant (No. 48)<sup>1</sup>.

It is true that in free Poland Sunday became relativized. More and more Poles spend this holy day in new „temples of consumption” which are supermarkets. Hundreds of thousands of people are forced to work. It is sad that the apostolic letter of the pope, *Dies Domini*, in which John Paul II appealed for respecting Sunday did not trigger any legal repercussions in Poland. It is quite clear that in Poland primitively understood liberalism has nothing to do with European standards. In the majority of EU countries trade on Sunday is forbidden. Finally, after

---

<sup>1</sup> This article includes bibliographical notes based on *Wykaz skrótów Encyklopedii* prepared by J. Warmiński, E. Gigilewicz, R. Sawa, Lublin 1993.

eighteen years of freedom, one can see the first straws in the wind<sup>2</sup>. A battle for a free Sunday started in Europe as well<sup>3</sup>. Apart from legal regulations one also needs adequate awareness of the faithful.

In view of desacralised time and a lack of a deeper understanding of the meaning of Sunday as the day of celebration, one can see a necessity of a permanent upbringing to celebrating Sunday. This process should start with deepening motives of participation in the Eucharist. One can find a lot on this matter in the letter by John Paul II on celebrating Sunday (No. 31–54). In the letter the pope explains that Sunday is: a day of celebrating the Creator’s works, a day of resurrection of Christ and the Gift of the Holy Spirit; a day brotherly and full of hope meeting of the pilgrim people on the feast of the word and the body of Christ, a day of joy, rest and solidarity as well as a day revealing the sense of time. The pope reminded us as well that „none is as vital or as community-forming as the Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Day and his Eucharist” (No. 35). Therefore followers of Christ, since the apostolic times of the church, have been meeting on Sundays to celebrate Eucharist (see Acts 2,46). It was the determinant of a Christian life. While elaborating upon the subject we wish to show that only a conscious participation in the Eucharist allows one to see its beauty and role in a proper celebration of Sunday and shaping a Christian life (compare SC 14 and LG 10).

### EUCCHARIST AS A SACRIFICE AND A FEAST

The Eucharist is, in a sense, the aim of a religious life because from the Christian perspective the purpose of life is getting involved in God’s redemptive plans. Their pivotal point is Jesus Christ and His Passover mystery which is constantly being personalised in the Church. It is done especially in a Eucharistic gathering thanks to which people get unified with Christ in the word and the sacrament and with one another. In this way it is the Eucharist where the community with God and among people becomes real and gets deepened. This type of a communion is the purpose of the whole history of salvation. Of course in the eschatological

<sup>2</sup> On February 1, 2008, during Let us win Sunday conference an agreement entitled covenant for a free Sunday signed by 21 representatives of non-governmental organisations, employers’ associations, trade unions and authorities from the world of science and politics. Its aim is, among others, to preserve a holiday character of Sunday. See *Podpisano „Przymierze na rzecz wolnej niedzieli”*, „Wiadomości KAI” 6 (10 II 2008), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> During a plenary gathering of COMECE that took place in Brussels in November 12–14, 2008 the bishops appealed for respecting Sunday rest as the basis of the European social model and a factor balancing work and a family life. Lately Sunday became endangered in EU members’ legislation due to a liberal policy of a consumerism. Therefore, in the context of the economical crisis, the bishops called the eurodeputies to register Sunday as a day of rest in the working time directive which is to be a subject of voting of the European Parliament. See *COMECE: kryzys finansowy ujawnił błędny porządek wartości*, „Wiadomości KAI” 47 (23 XI 2008), p. 26.

perspective it is also the source towards the purpose since this is the sign pointing at the ultimate community which will get realised at the end of the history of salvation. Being the source, however, it already includes its own purpose to which it is supposed to lead<sup>4</sup>.

Discovering the role of the Eucharist in the Christian celebration of Sunday is related in the first place to a proper understanding of the essence of the Holy Mass. One of the common mistakes is a lack of awareness that the Eucharist is a sacrifice and a feast at the same time<sup>5</sup>. In the instruction on Eucharistic worship *Eucharisticum mysterium* one reads: „Hence the Mass, the Lord’s Supper, is at the same time and inseparably: a sacrifice in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated; a memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, who said *do this in memory of me* (Luke 22:19); a sacred banquet in which, through the communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the People of God share the benefits of the Paschal Sacrifice, renew the New Covenant which God has made with man once for all through the Blood of Christ, and in faith and hope foreshadow and anticipate the eschatological banquet in the kingdom of the Father, proclaiming the Lord’s death „till His coming” (No. 3). Also, in the the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* published in 2002 one reads that

the People of God is called together, with a priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord, the Eucharistic Sacrifice. For this reason Christ’s promise applies in an outstanding way to such a local gathering of the holy Church: *Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst* (Mt 18:20). For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very liturgical assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and continuously under the Eucharistic species (No. 27).

From the above quotations one clearly concludes that the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, which is offered by the Church together with a priest, is first of all the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice offered by Christ on the cross to God and his Father becoming *sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world* (1 Jn 2:2). The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was both external and internal. The external sacrifice lead, through the sufferings of a body and soul, to death on the cross and a complete separation of Christ’s blood from His body. The internal sacrifice, on the other hand, is identified with a boundless surrender to the Farther in love and obedience and fulfilling His will to the very end (compare Ph 2.8). This submission and obedience was accompanied by love of Christ about which He himself said that *greater love has no-one but this, that he lay down his life for his friends* (Jn 15:13).

---

<sup>4</sup> See F. Blachnicki, *Msza św. a budowanie wspólnoty*, „Collectanea Theologica” 39,2 (1969), p. 95, 96.

During the Last Supper Christ established the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood to preserve the sacrifice of the cross for all ages and entrust it to the Church for his remembrance. In the Eucharistic sacrifice the offering of the Church and the holy banquet form a single mystery and a unity. Christ entrusted his sacrifice to the Church so that the faithful might participate in it both spiritually through faith and love and sacramentally, through their presence and the banquet of the Holy Communion. Their presence aims at unity with Christ who sacrifices himself for us to the Father as an offering. Christ becomes in the offering of the Church both the High Priest and the Offering. This Christ present on the altars of the whole world, the whole Church – performing the role of a priest and the Host – offers to the Father and at the same time makes a self-sacrifice together with Him (compare LG 11)<sup>6</sup>.

In realisation of the Ecclesiastical communion through the Eucharist only proper awareness does not suffice. The value of the Mass in itself is one thing, whereas its actual effectiveness, that is limited, is quite another<sup>7</sup>. The Mass – as the Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium* teaches us – „has no effect except in those united to the passion of Christ by faith and charity.... To these it brings a greater or less benefit in proportion to their devotion” (No. 12). As one concludes from the quoted fragment of the Instruction effectiveness of the Mass depends on a person’s internal involvement in the celebrated sacrifice. A person’s whole spir-

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. the presentation of a Holy Mass in the first edition of The General Instruction of the Roman Missal from April 6, 1969 in which a sacrifice is not mentioned at all (compare SC 33. 47; LG 3, 28; PO 2, 4, 5). In No. 7 of this Instruction one reads that: „The Lord’s Supper or Mass is a holy sinaxis which is a gathering of the people of God with a priest presiding to celebrate the memorial of the Lord. For this reason Christ’s promise applies supremely to such a local gathering together of the Church: *Where two or three come together in my name, there am I in their midst* (Mt 18:20)”. It was only after an intervention of catholic theological circles that a new Roman Missal from 1971 gave back specific articles of the Instruction their proper, catholic content. The very same No. 7 was expressed as follows: „At Mass or the Lord’s Supper, the people of God are called together, with a priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord or Eucharistic sacrifice. For this reason Christ’s promise applies supremely to such a local gathering together of the Church: *Where two or three come together in my name, there am I in their midst* (Mt 18:20). For at the celebration of Mass, which perpetuates the sacrifice of the cross, Christ is really present to the assembly gathered in his name; he is present in the person of the minister, in his own word, and indeed substantially and permanently under the Eucharistic elements”. See R. Rak, *Eucharystia w życiu chrześcijańskim. Studium teologiczno-pastoralne o integralnym rozumieniu i pełnym przeżywaniu Eucharystii*, Katowice 1984, p. 140, 141.

<sup>6</sup> R. Rak, *Wychowanie do życia eucharystycznego...*, p. 142, 143.

<sup>7</sup> „It suffices to ask why so many celebrated Masses do not eradicate evil, sin and its results in the world? Why don’t we, participants of the Eucharist, become perfect and holy instantly? Why don’t we receive all the graces we are asking for during Masses? Why does the Church repeatedly offer Masses for the deceased? The answer is only one: because in practice effectiveness of a Mass is limited”. J. Grześkowiak, *Wewnętrzne uczestnictwo we Mszy św.*, in: *Eucharystia w duszpasterstwie*, ed. A.L. Szafranski, Lublin 1977, p. 24.

itual activity is described here as faith and love. Fruits of the celebrated Eucharistic liturgy are limited here by the disposition of those who celebrate it i.e. a priest and the faithful. Here one can see confirmation of the leading rule, namely that spiritual effects are never produced independently from one's personal dispositions and efforts and that a properly understood liturgy of the Church never works in a magical or automatic way.

### SUNDAY AS „THE EIGHTH DAY” IN A PARISH

In view of the above it seems that both in teaching and upbringing the link between Sunday and what can be called „the theology of the eighth day” is insufficiently emphasised. For Sunday, as John Paul II emphasises in *Dies Domini*

is not only the first day, it is also „the eighth day”, set within the sevenfold succession of days in a unique and transcendent position which evokes not only the beginning of time, but also its end in „the age to come”. [...] Sunday symbolizes that truly singular day which will follow the present time, the day without end which will know neither evening nor morning, the imperishable age which will never grow old; Sunday is the ceaseless foretelling of life without end which renews the hope of Christians and encourages them on their way (No. 26).

On the other hand eschatological dimension of the Eucharist, emphasised by the theology of the eighth day, expresses the very nature of a Christian existence on the earth. It is a privileged moment in which the Church experiences itself as „the pilgrim”. As the Passover food of pilgrims is „the sacrament of exodus” and „the sacrament of Passover”. It is not a coincidence that since the first ages in the introduction to the missal preface the words *Sursum Corda!* Resound, because the whole Christian life is to be a total *sursum cor*. To have „a risen heart” means to put trust in God. The Mass stimulates Christians to live in an eschatological way, as pilgrims, with their eyes and hearts turned upwards. The Eucharist builds an ecclesiological community, since it keeps Christians „dressed ready”, in the state of a constant Passover. It does not allow the Church to become comfortable, to settle down, to become dormant. As Raniero Cantalamessa said:

the world needs this type of a parish; not a place where you can find all sorts of convenient facilities, actions and entertainment which are produced and distributed by the world, but the place of a pilgrimage and joy. The place where one can experience the presence of the Holy Spirit and where someone coming for the first time is forced to notice something else and shout like those who were entering the first Christian communities *Truly God is among you!* (1 Co 14:25)<sup>8</sup>.

Therefore the Sunday Eucharist should be a real celebration. Aesthetic and functional organisation of the place where the Mass is celebrated so that eve-

<sup>8</sup> *Eucharystia nasze uświęcenie*, Warszawa 1994, p. 139, 140.

ryone could participate duly is very important. The quality of the singing and suggested repertoire of liturgical songs is vital. The Sunday liturgy should differ from a weekday liturgy already in the way it is celebrated. It can be visible in the procession with a participation of all the liturgical ministries, with a censer and candles used in the proclamation of the Gospel. During the Eucharistic gathering one should respect a division of functions. It does not bring a priest glory if after a few years he still cannot gather and train the most necessary assistants. In our pastoral practice liturgical ministries are still too „infantilised”. Grown-ups are usually not allowed to read the Word of God or proclaim intercessions of the prayer of the faithful.

Theology of the eighth day may be reflected concretely in the pastoral practice of a parish community. First of all it applies to the „home Church” since families are the basic community of a parish. A consequence of a proper celebration of „the Lord’s day”, apart from a conscious and fruitful participation in a Sunday Eucharist, should be deeper and deeper family bonds. Undoubtedly there are thousands of ways to emphasise the fact of the outstanding character of this day within a family. Apart from a family’s participation in a Sunday Eucharist one can use this day for inviting from time to time a lonely member of a Christian community for a meal around a family table, underline the importance of a Sunday meal though a prayer a subject of which will be a mystery celebrated in a special way on this particular Sunday or a thanksgiving for all the good things from the previous week, choosing such a way of spending free time that gives opportunity to express joy and mutual unity, devoting some time on Saturday evening for prayer and reading the Sunday liturgy of the Word and use this opportunity to explain and forgive painful words and deeds from the past week.

To experience Sunday properly one cannot of course ritualise all the time devoted to leisure and relaxation of a family. After all the final test of effectiveness of a participation in a Sunday Eucharist should be a Christian *caritas*. Since the apostolic times this was one of the most important elements of the Sunday celebration. Not only did people share offerings they brought, but also the Eucharist was taken to the sick and prisoners. Therefore one should remind the faithful about the importance of a Sunday visit to the sick, the lonely and to friends. In this respect a special importance should be given to bringing the Eucharist to the sick by lay Eucharistic ministers. It is especially needed by those who before becoming ill used to participate in Mass on a regular and sometimes even daily basis and were active in the parish community<sup>9</sup>.

As it has already been stated one cannot reduce the problem of Sunday and its Christian celebrating only to a participation in Sunday Eucharist. It will indeed always be the source and climax of this celebration. However in a catechetical and

<sup>9</sup> D. Bourgeois, *Duszpasterstwo Kościoła*, Poznań 2001, p. 573–575.

pastoral work, especially in a liturgical formation, one should take into consideration other elements of the Sunday celebration as well. It is worth emphasising that apart from the Eucharist, the church celebrates the day of the Lord and every other day by the liturgy of the hours, therefore the faithful should be given a chance to participate in Sunday matins and vespers. In the pastoral work one should emphasise the value of Saturday evening. This time does not function in the awareness of many priests and the faithful as the beginning of a joyful Sunday celebration. It is not about an evening Mass, since in smaller parishes it is not needed, but most of all about a liturgical initiation of Sunday e.g. by the first vespers and in families by a common supper and prayer.

Sunday is the day of joy and rest. Ministers therefore should take into consideration issues related to spending free time (extended, thanks to a free Saturday). This is why one cannot limit ministers' work only to the liturgy itself. This is the way of fighting with secularisation, especially the ruling „Sunday boredom and emptiness” so typical for many social circles. A parish as a community should feel especially responsible for the young and create decent conditions for spending free time. For this purpose one can use parish centres and other parish premises.

Currently in the parish pastoral practice one should pay special attention to the problem of the weekend. Many families living in big urban centres often have two dwelling places: a place where their weekend house is located and a place where children attend catechises classes. Such a dualism of an ecclesiastical belonging weakens considerably the vitality of Christian communities. A solution may be Eucharist in one's native parish late in the evening on Sunday. A parish priest of one's permanent residence may also suggest a monthly meeting of all members of a parish community. This solution assumes that, the conditions permitting, the faithful will agree to modify their ordinary rhythm of life to celebrate this particular Sunday. Already at the beginning of a year one should set a time table of such Sundays, bearing in mind Winter break and Summer holidays. When the Eucharist is finished one should plan some time for friendly meetings and exchange of views. One should also come up with a system of announcements to inform the faithful about everything they might find interesting in the month to follow until the next Sunday gathering of this kind. Of course this is not to boil a weekly Eucharistic gathering down to a monthly rhythm, but to keep, if possible, thanks to common efforts of all the members of a parish, roots and a sacramental unity of a Eucharistic gathering in an urban environment in which they live and work.

Another possible solution is to suggest to the faithful of urban parishes to devote one evening to parish life with a frequency they believe is adequate. This should be most of all a time of prayer, exchange of ideas and deepening faith. The faithful would be informed about everything that will happen in the nearest days and weeks. Again, it is not to exchange a weekly Mass by a prayer meeting, but to keep, if and when possible, a sacramental manifestation of the existence of a Christian community.



A Christian community should take care of giving an opportunity to participate in a Sunday Eucharist to all the members of a parish. For example instead of organising Masses only for children one may suggest a Liturgy of the Word especially adjusted to their mental capacities and celebrated in a separate room. Afterwards children would participate in the Eucharist together with everyone. If the need occurred children might manifest their presence by singing or some symbolic gestures. Also, the sick should participate in a Sunday Eucharist if their health allowed them to do so. The sick and the old should have a special place in the Eucharist because thanks to their sufferings they are in the very heart of a Christian community, a visible sign of Christ's cross. Resigning from including the sick and the disabled in the gathering is from the side of a community not only a sign of carelessness, but also an offence to its vocation to be a gathering of all the faithful in their diversity<sup>10</sup>.

Existence of an ecclesiastical community is not only a problem of one place or a community of words and gestures, but most of all it is a problem of opening the heart to God and all the gathered. Therefore the ultimate goal should be the creation of an Eucharistic community that helps one another and is interested in what is going on with specific members of the community. It would be justifiable to provide the faithful with rooms in which after the Eucharist the faithful might meet, talk, read catholic newspapers. It should be a place where, which is important for those living far from the church, people may have a cup of tea or a light meal. This would also be a form of continuation of the Eucharist banquet, a form of agape. Such a tuition towards a participation in the Eucharist should lead to the transfer of the Eucharistic style of life into people's everyday life<sup>11</sup>.

Realisation of an authentic community marked by a high level of intimacy, social bonds, emotional depth and a moral involvement is a vital problem in big urban parishes<sup>12</sup>. This is why a solution seems to be the creation of community sub-structures: quarter, block of flat, neighbour, professional, family, youth and children groups as well as all sorts of other bodies based on common interests. It is the first-rate task in a parish to look for natural communities and make them liturgical ones. Communities which would celebrate the Eucharist together and at the same time deepen their unity and love. Here we touch upon the issue of the so called „community liturgy”. Liturgy, if it is to be linked with life, and this is its sense and the condition of its effectiveness, cannot be limited only to the church walls. What is at stake is celebration of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, in small family, friend and professional groups in which there is a real sense of community. This is a demand of authenticity of basic liturgical symbols. Priority in

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 575–577.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Collection for Easter Monday, in: *Mszal rzymski dla diecezji polskich*, Poznań 1986, p. 186.

<sup>12</sup> Compare R. Nisbet, *The sociological Tradition*, New York 1966, p. 47, 48.

liturgical symbols should be given to persons, not objects. For the primary symbol in a liturgy is a gathering which is a full sign of the church when not only does it point at its institutional structure, but also through an intensive bond of love, friendship and kindness express the mystery of the invisible reality of the Church as the community of faith, hope and love<sup>13</sup>.

The practice of celebrating Mass in small groups may of course create a danger of „privatisation of the liturgy”. A chance of reaching a better communication and a bond in a small circle is obtained at the price of a kind of isolation. There is a danger that participants of such Eucharist gatherings will only look for a personal and emotional satisfaction and the communal and ecclesiastical character of a liturgy, degraded to a pseudo-family rite, will be lost. Such dangers are avoidable and the benefits from such a liturgy may be enormous<sup>14</sup>. Some people discover only in this particular way the real meaning and undeniable values of a Christian worship. Experiencing during a liturgy a Christian brotherhood, simplifying texts, enrichment of gestures, more spontaneous prayers, the form of the Eucharist more resembling a feast – all this makes participation in a Eucharist in a small group more involved, deep and fruitful. Thanks to this practice a Sunday liturgy in parish churches with a big number of the faithful will not be only a meeting of isolated individuals, but a huge „banquet of communities” on which various groups are gathered to celebrate „the remembrance of the Lord”<sup>15</sup>.

It is worth mentioning in this context an interesting and important initiative of the Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments of the Polish Episcopate. In view of the fact that after the Second Vatican Council we received a lot of light concerning the liturgy and its celebrating, the reflection on this contemporary theory and practice gives birth to The Ceremonial of the Parish Community<sup>16</sup>. It shows first of all the whole gathering as „the celebrant” of the liturgy, then comments upon specific liturgical celebrations in parishes. The third part concerns a liturgical formation. The idea of The Ceremonial is to help priests and the faithful, those who serve in parishes as well as all involved in a liturgical formation to go deeper into liturgical celebrations and experience the mystery of the Church in them<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Compare J. Grzeškowiak, *Liturgia dziś*, Katowice 1982, p. 172. For these reasons A.M. Greeley says that „liturgy that does not ratify and does not strengthen an intense friendship between members of a Christian community is a liturgy that is highly inadequate as a symbol”. *Symbolizm religijny, liturgia i wspólnota*, „Concilium” 7,2 (1971), p. 115.

<sup>14</sup> Compare Z. Wit, *Msza św. w grupach specjalnych*, in: *Mszał księgą życia chrześcijańskiego*, ed. B. Nadolski, Poznań 1989, p. 451–468.

<sup>15</sup> J. Grzeškowiak, *Liturgia dziś...*, p. 173.

<sup>16</sup> *Ceremonial wspólnoty parafialnej. Tekst roboczy*, ed. S. Szczepaniec, Kraków 2002.

<sup>17</sup> The discussion over the draft of Ceremonial includes various issues. One of the interesting discussions is a discussion on liturgical functions which might be performed by special teams led by persons appointed to services-ministries. A presence of such persons in parishes might considerably contribute to a broader and more active involvement of the faithful in a liturgy.

In this context one of the key pastoral issues is the problem of the baptised who did not go through regular formation stages and organic steps of Christian life. These are people who did not reach a conscious awareness of their faith and their vocation in the Church community, but participate in liturgical gatherings. These gatherings are in principle directed and dedicated to a Christian community of believers. Liturgy that does not have an environment of faith in which it could be celebrated properly does not build a communion of the Church and, what is more, causes a disharmony and disunity as well as the atmosphere of alienation and artificiality in the liturgical gathering<sup>18</sup>. Undoubtedly the satisfactory solution is not adjusting liturgical or biblical texts to the level of participants of a liturgy. A liturgy of the word becomes in such a case a catechumenate and this does not correspond to its matter and its role in an Eucharistic celebration. This is why one should look for other ways and methods of solving this problem. It could be, for example, frequent and periodic meetings of all types in a parish which would introduce people into a divine reality of faith. These gatherings might correspond to the three stages of faith development: evangelisation, catechumenate and catechesis. Here various types of evangelisation-and-catechumenal retreats, mystagogical catechesis together with properly shaped semi-liturgical and Eucharistical services might be used<sup>19</sup>.

Summing up, let us once more come back to *Dies Domini*. In his letter John Paul II drew our attention to the fact that

surroundings [...] are sometimes decidedly hostile and at other times – more frequently in fact – indifferent and unresponsive to the Gospel message. If believers are not to be overwhelmed, they must be able to count on the support of the Christian community. This is why they must be convinced that it is crucially important for the life of faith that they should come together with others on Sundays to celebrate the Passover of the Lord in the sacrament of the New Covenant (No. 48).

## EUCCHARISTIC GATHERING AS THE HEART OF CELEBRATING „THE EIGHTH DAY” IN A PARISH

### Summary

It is true that in free Poland Sunday became gelatinised. More and more Poles spend this holy day in new „temples of consumption” which are supermarkets. Hundreds of thousands of people are forced to work. It is sad that the apostolic letter of the pope, *Dies Domini*, in which John Paul II appealed for respecting Sunday did not trigger any legal

---

<sup>18</sup> F. Błachnicki, *Liturgia a współczesni pół-chrześcijanie*, „Collectanea Theologica” 39,3 (1969), p 118, 119.

<sup>19</sup> Compare A. Przybecki, *Polskiego duszpasterstwa zmaganie się ze Mszą świętą*, in: idem, *Duszpasterstwo w Polsce. Poszukiwanie nowych form obecności*, Poznań 2001, p. 53–66.

repercussions in Poland. In view of desecralised time and a lack of a deeper understanding of the meaning of Sunday as the day of celebration, one can see a necessity of a permanent upbringing to celebrating Sunday.

The Eucharist is, in a sense, the aim of a religious life because from the Christian perspective the purpose of life is getting involved in God's redemptive plans. Their pivotal point is Jesus Christ and His Passover mystery which is constantly being personalised in the Church. It is done especially in a Eucharistic gathering thanks to which people get unified with Christ in the word and the sacrament and with one another. In this way it is the Eucharist where the community with God and among people becomes real and gets deepened. This type of a communion is the purpose of the whole history of salvation. Of course in the eschatological perspective it is also the source towards the purpose since this is the sign pointing at the ultimate community which will get realised at the end of the history of salvation. Being the source, however, it already includes its own purpose to which it is supposed to lead.

In view of the above it seems that both in teaching and upbringing the link between Sunday and what can be called „the theology of the eighth day” is insufficiently emphasised. For Sunday, as John Paul II emphasises in *Dies Domini*

is not only the first day, it is also „the eighth day”, set within the sevenfold succession of days in a unique and transcendent position which evokes not only the beginning of time, but also its end in „the age to come”. [...] Sunday symbolizes that truly singular day which will follow the present time, the day without end which will know neither evening nor morning, the imperishable age which will never grow old; Sunday is the ceaseless foretelling of life without end which renews the hope of Christians and encourages them on their way (No. 26).

On the other hand eschatological dimension of the Eucharist, emphasised by the theology of the eighth day, expresses the very nature of a Christian existence on the earth. It is a privileged moment in which the Church experiences itself as „the pilgrim”. The Mass stimulates Christians to live in an eschatological way, as pilgrims, with their eyes and hearts turned upwards. Therefore the Sunday Eucharist should be a real celebration. Theology of the eighth day may be reflected concretely in the pastoral practice of a parish community. For the world does not need a parish in which you can find all sorts of convenient facilities, actions and entertainment which are produced and distributed by the world, but the place of a pilgrimage and joy. The place where one can experience the presence of the Holy Spirit and where someone coming for the first time is forced to notice something else and shout like those who were entering the first Christian communities Truly God is among you! (1 Co 14:25).

### ZGROMADZENIE EUCHARYSTYCZNE SERCEM ŚWIĘTOWANIA „ÓSMEGO DNIA” W PARAFII Streszczenie

W wolnej Polsce nastąpiła relatywizacja niedzieli. Coraz większy procent Polaków ten święty dzień spędza w nowych „świątyniach konsumpcji”, jakimi są hipermarkety. Smutkiem napawa fakt, że żadnych reperkusji w polskim prawie nie spowodował list apo-

stolski Jana Pawła II *Dies Domini*, w którym papież apelował o poszanowanie niedzieli. Wobec faktu desakralizacji czasu oraz braku głębszego zrozumienia sensu niedzieli jako dnia świątecznego, jawi się konieczność permanentnego wychowania do właściwego świętowania dnia Pańskiego. Eucharystia w pewnym sensie jest celem życia religijnego. Wynika to stąd, że z chrześcijańskiego punktu widzenia celem życia człowieka jest włączenie się w Boże plany zbawcze. Ich punktem kulminacyjnym jest Jezus Chrystus i Jego tajemnica paschalna, która nieustannie uobecnia się w Kościele. Dokonuje się to zwłaszcza w zgromadzeniu eucharystycznym, dzięki któremu ludzie jednoczą się z Chrystusem w słowie i sakramencie oraz ze sobą nawzajem. W ten sposób w Eucharystii realizuje się i pogłębia wspólnota ludzi z Bogiem i pomiędzy sobą. Tego rodzaju komunია jest celem całej historii zbawienia. Oczywiście w aspekcie eschatologicznym jest ona równocześnie źródłem, gdyż jest znakiem wskazującym na ostateczną wspólnotę, która zrealizuje się dopiero u kresu historii zbawienia. Będąc jednakże źródłem, zawiera w sobie już to, do czego ma prowadzić. W związku z powyższym wydaje się, iż ciągle za mało w nauczaniu i wychowaniu podkreślany jest związek niedzieli z tym, co można nazwać „teologią dnia ósmego”. Niedziela bowiem, jak podkreśla Jan Paweł II w *Dies Domini*, nie tylko jest dniem pierwszym, ale także „dniem ósmym”, to znaczy, że w stosunku do tygodniowego cyklu siedmiu dni zajmuje pozycję wyjątkową i transcendentną, symbolizując zarazem początek czasu i jego kres w „przyszłym wieku [...]”. Niedziela jest znakiem tego naprawdę jedynego dnia, który nastąpi po obecnym czasie – dnia trwającego bez końca [...]; niedziela jest nieustannym zwiastowaniem życia wiecznego, które podtrzymuje nadzieje chrześcijan i dodaje im sił w drodze” (nr 26). Eschatologiczny wymiar Eucharystii, podkreślany przez teologię dnia ósmego, wyraża samą naturę chrześcijańskiej egzystencji na ziemi. Jest to uprzywilejowany moment, w którym Kościół doświadcza siebie jako pielgrzyma. Msza św. pobudza chrześcijan, by żyli eschatologicznie ze spojrzeniem i sercem zwróconym w górę. Dlatego też niedzielne sprawowanie Eucharystii powinno być prawdziwym świętem w parafii. Teologia dnia ósmego może znaleźć także konkretne odzwierciedlenie w praktyce pastoralnej wspólnoty parafialnej. Świat bowiem nie potrzebuje parafii jako miejsca, w której można znaleźć wszystkie udogodnienia, działania i rozrywki, lecz jako miejsca pielgrzymki i radości. Miejsca, gdzie doświadcza się obecności Ducha i gdzie ktoś, kto przychodzi po raz pierwszy, jest zmuszony dostrzec coś innego i zawołać jak ci, którzy wchodzili do pierwszych wspólnot chrześcijańskich: Naprawdę Bóg jest wśród was! (por. 1 Kor 14,25).

**Keywords:** celebrating Sunday, eschatological dimension of Eucharist, theology of the „eighth day”

**Słowa kluczowe:** eschatologiczny wymiar Eucharystii, świętowanie niedzieli, teologia „dnia ósmego”