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Contemporary directions of Polish homiletics in the twenty first century

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Abstract: Recently there has been a systematic development of Polish homiletics. Numerous academic works are fully developed. The purpose of this paper is to present major directions of research carried out by Polish homiletics scholars in the twenty first century. The latest publications Polish homiletics scholars put forward many postulates aiming at renewal of both the theory and practice of preaching. They point at the priority role of a homily in preaching the word of God and emphasise a mystagogical dimension of a homily. Issues related to formal homiletics, especially a rhetorical dimension of preaching, are discussed in detail. Numerous works point at the evangelisation function of preaching. Issues related to teaching homiletics at universities and seminaries are discussed as well.

Keywords: Homiletics. Bibliography. Research. Polish homiletics.

Recently there has been a systematic development of Polish homiletics. Polish preachers often refer to numerous academic works published in German, English, French and Italian. However Polish homiletic thought is hardly known abroad. The purpose of this paper is to present major direction of research carried out by Polish homiletics scholars in the twenty first century. The major source of my information on academic works is the content of electronic *Homiletic bibliography*¹.

1 Bibliographic database

The bibliographic database allows everyone to find specific books, dissertations, papers, summaries and reviews. It is a valuable source of information about published works concerning a specific scientific field. Theological sciences have their bibliographies, too. *The homiletic bibliography* was made available in April 2008.

Putting together a bibliography has a long-established tradition, starting from the antiquity. It has got huge achievements related to development of culture and literature. A bibliography of written achievements plays a role of recording academic research activities within a given field or specialty. Its major purpose is to satisfy

¹ <http://www.homiletika.wtl.us.edu.pl>. This is an electronic bibliographic base which is the outcome of the following publication: *Polska bibliografia homiletyczna 1945–2005*, oprac. W. Przychyna, L. Szewczyk, Kraków 2007. The Electronic Homiletic Bibliography is supplemented each time by new bibliographic entries sent to the moderator.

the existing or expected social need formulated by academic researchers, grown-ups and the young looking for specific information as well as academic and cultural institutions. Electronic version of *The Polish homiletic bibliography* currently includes 3987 academic items published between 1945-2017 and provides information concerning various types of publications concerning preaching the word of God. This paper includes analysis of works published between 2000 - 2017. Among 1714 academic works there are 1218 papers, 84 books and 33 doctoral dissertations.

2 Contemporary Polish preachers

Currently in Poland there are 10 theological faculties, 13 theological universities and 41 higher seminaries run by Roman-catholic dioceses and 21 seminaries run by religious orders. Three seminaries run by other Christian denominations. Polish preachers are associated in The Polish Preachers Association (55 members in total). Point 6 of the Articles of Association defines the major aims of the association, which are as follows: "Carrying out research in homiletics, searching for new ways and forms of preaching in the context of contemporary challenges, caring for education of preachers and quality of preaching the word of God in Poland"². The most active in terms of published works Polish preachers are: Kazimierz Panuś (Kraków), Jan Twardy (Przemysł), Wiesław Przyczyna (Kraków), Henryk Sławiński (Kraków), Stanisław Dyk (Lublin) and Leszek Szewczyk (Katowice).

3 The latest directions of research in homiletics

There are 350 subject entries in *The Homiletic Bibliography* that refer to the entire range of issues analysed in homiletic works. The table below illustrates the biggest frequency of subject entries in academic works devoted to homiletics published between 2000 - 2017:

Key words	N
Homily, theology of homily	165
History of preaching, study of preaching achievements	158
Liturgy and preaching (lectionary, liturgical year, sacraments)	124
Formal homiletics (language of preaching, rhetoric in preaching)	101
Preaching the word of God (essence, purpose, tasks)	87
Preacher of the word of God	83
Kerygma	68
Homiletics (homiletic theology)	54
Homiletic education, preparation for preaching, didactics of homiletics	53
Bible in preaching, Gospel (Good News), word of God	47
Sermon (structure, features)	43
Marian sermon	40

² <http://www.homileci.pl/statut> (access: 03.04.2017)

Missions to the people, parish retreats	37
Sermons, sermons for children and youth	36
Christocentrism (Jesus Christ)	34
Evangelisation, new evangelization	34
Mystagogy	30
Listener, listening to the word of God	25
Mass media, radio sermons	25
Existential, moral and social topics	24

Analysed works can be divided into several major thematic groups. A significant part can be assigned to the theology of preaching (theology of preaching, mystagogical dimension of a homily, biblical and liturgical sources of homily preaching). Moreover, Polish homiletics scholars analyse issues related to the subject of preaching, a formal side of preaching, didactics of homiletics and homiletic training. A significant part of homiletic publications is devoted to the history of preaching and a study of preaching achievements of specific preaching of the word of God. The latest works analyse the issue of preaching the word of God in the context of the new evangelisation and parish retreats and missions.

3.1 Homily

For theology of preaching one of the most important issues is theology of homily. Academic publications³ point at the origin of a homily⁴, its definition⁵, meaning and functions⁶, specific dimensions⁷, its liturgical context⁸ and the need of its constant improving⁹.

Homily preaching, also called liturgical or mystagogical one, is about introducing and initiating the faithful to the Christian mysteries hidden under the liturgical signs. Its purpose is to show the presence and actions of Christ and lead to union with Him. This type of preaching takes place in the liturgy and assumes a form of

³ The footnotes include selected publications. Listing all the studies from a given field would exceed a standard length of an academic article.

⁴ SŁAWIŃSKI, H.: *Judaistyczne korzenie współczesnej homilii*, [in:] *Ekumenizm, teologia, kultura*, edited by K. Konecki, Z. Pawlak, K. Rulka, Włocławek 2006, pp 488-501.

⁵ PRZYCZYNA, W.: *Homilia pięćdziesiąt lat po Soborze Watykańskim II. Pytania, problemy, wyzwania*, Kraków 2013; TWARDY, J.: *Przemiany w polskiej teorii homilii pod wpływem nauki Soboru Watykańskiego II*, [in:] *Wierność i aggiornamento. Wokół recepcji Soboru Watykańskiego II*, edited by G. Kucza, Katowice 2006, pp 205-220.

⁶ SZEWCZYK, L.: *Funkcje homilii i jej rola w liturgii*, [in:] *Liturgia w podstawowych formach wyrazu*, edited by A. Żądło, Katowice 2011, pp 119-135.

⁷ DYK, S.: *Homilijny przekaz prawd wiary*, „Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny” 16,1 (2008), pp 79-91.

⁸ SŁAWIŃSKI, H.: *Liturgia słowa i liturgia eucharystyczna jako jeden akt liturgiczny*, „Przegląd Homiletyczny” 11 (2007), pp 19-32.

⁹ TWARDY, J.: *Konieczność poprawienia jakości homilii*, [in:] *Moc słowa Pańskiego. Adhortacja apostołska Verbum Domini w refleksji biblijno-homiletycznej*, edited by B. Migut, A. Piwowar, Lublin 2012, pp 249-266.

a homily being an integral part of a liturgical celebration. This preaching is mystagogical while it explains hidden realities through linking them with liturgical texts, explaining the salvific sense of the liturgical signs and leading to the very centre of the mystery of cult and introducing to the mysteries of the salvific dimension of the sacraments¹⁰.

A homily combines three vital elements. The first one is celebrating the mystery, the second one is a biblical text with its message and actualisation and the third one is a current situation of specific listeners. Preaching the message of salvation should be always linked with the liturgy, and the former and the latter with life of listeners. According to the teaching of the Church preaching should be based on the Scripture, Tradition, liturgy, the Magisterium of the Church and the life of the Church. Polish homiletics scholars often refer to topics related to the biblical source of homily preaching and interpretation of specific biblical pericopes¹¹.

Homily is in its very nature an explanation, interpretation and actualisation of biblical and liturgical texts. Explanation of the articles of faith and the rules of Christian life, which is a homily, should be based on liturgical texts from a given day. A preacher should refer to a celebrated mystery of salvation and allow listeners to draw strength from the Passover Mystery and unite in a homily a biblical text with a liturgical text of a specific liturgical rite. If he does so, the two content spheres become mutually explanatory and the liturgy receives, thanks to the word of God, its salvific explanation. Polish homiletics scholars in their latest works analyse mutual relations between the liturgy and homiletic preaching, importance of the lectionary¹², preaching during the sacraments and sacramentals¹³ and during the liturgical year¹⁴.

3.2 Theology of preaching

Another topic analysed by contemporary Polish homiletics scholars is theology of preaching. Authors involved in analysing the said topic are: Andrzej Draguła¹⁵,

¹⁰ DRAGUŁA, A.: *Mistagogiczny wymiar homilii*, [in:] *Funkcja inicjacyjna katechezy w Kościele współczesnym*, edited by K. Kantowski, Szczecin 2007, pp 289-306; DYK, S.: *Mistagogiczna natura i funkcja homilii*, „Przegląd Homiletyczny” 11 (2007), pp 103-112.

¹¹ DYK, S.: *Zasady interpretacji tekstu biblijnego w praktyce kaznodziejskiej*, „Perspectiva – Legnickie Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne” 14,1 (2009), pp 99-121.

¹² TWARDY, J.: *Tekst biblijny w liturgii*, [in:] *Liturgia w podstawowych formach wyrazu*, edited by A. Żądło, Katowice 2011, pp 91-118.

¹³ KALBARCZYK, A.: *Celebracja homilii w kontekście celebracji Eucharystii i niedzieli*, „Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana” 1 (2012), pp 63-80.

¹⁴ TWARDY, J.: *Kaznodziejskie nauczanie o pokucie w roku liturgicznym*, „Przegląd Homiletyczny” 12 (2008), pp 119-133.

¹⁵ DRAGUŁA, A.: *Przepowiadanie jako wewnętrzny dialog Słowa*, [in:] *W dialogu ze Słowem. Biblia w katechezie i nauczaniu religii*, edited by K. Kantowski, Szczecin 2011, pp 67-82.

Stanisław Dyka¹⁶, Wiesław Przyczyna¹⁷, Gerard Siwek¹⁸, Henryk Sławiński¹⁹, Leszek Szewczyk²⁰, Jan Twardy²¹ and Edward Wiszowaty²². One of the most frequently analysed topics within theology of preaching is the topic of the subject, especially the topic of a preacher of the word of God. This theme is frequently analysed in the Polish homiletic literature²³.

A significant part of published works is devoted to the history of preaching. It is largely thanks to Kazimierz Panuś. He is the author of numerous works devoted to the topic and lately he published three-volume study entitled *Kazania w kulturze polskiej. Edycje kolekcji tematycznych*²⁴. Moreover, Kazimierz Panuś published in "Materiały homiletyczne" a series entitled *Słynne kazania polskie*. A collection of several dozen sermons is a valuable material that analyses the old Polish art of preaching and at the same time a source helpful in didactics of the history of preaching.

3.3 Formal components of a preaching unit

In the latest works Polish homiletics scholars are also interested in the issue of formal side of homilies. Analysis of a human side of the word of God is the subject of a formal homiletics that deals with such issues as: a method of preparation of a preaching unit (homily, sermon), its linguistic form, the way of preaching, personality of a preacher, knowledge of listeners, etc. This section of homiletics also has its theological character. Carefulness for the quality of a human word is treated as a service for the Word, whereas a formal homiletics itself becomes a reflection on the ways of ministering with a human word for the word of God²⁵. Published works discuss, inter alia, a relation between a form and a content of preaching²⁶, importance of a

¹⁶ DYK, S.: Relacja między przepowiadaniem słowa Bożego a Kościołem, „Kieleckie Studia Teologiczne” 7 (2008), pp 27-42.

¹⁷ PRZYCZYNA, W.: O metodologii homiletyki, „Studia Nauk Teologicznych PAN” 2 (2007), pp 289-300.

¹⁸ SIWEK, G.: Przepowiadanie słowa Bożego, [in:] *Leksykon teologii pastoralnej*, edited by R. Kamiński, W. Przygoda, M. Fijałkowski, Lublin 2006, pp 696-702.

¹⁹ SŁAWIŃSKI, H.: Homiletyka w dobie nowej ewangelizacji, „Acta. Facultatis Theologicae Universitatis Comenianae Bratislaviensis” 8,2 (2011), pp 12-26.

²⁰ SZEWCZYK, L.: *Odnowa przepowiadania słowa Bożego w (archi)diecezji katowickiej po Soborze Watykańskim II. Studium homiletyczne*, Katowice 2009.

²¹ TWARDY, J.: *Aktualizacja słowa Bożego w kaznodziejstwie*, Przemysł 2009.

²² WISZOWATY, E.: Przepowiadanie w ponowoczesności, „Studia Pastoralne” 9 (2013), pp 178-190.

²³ KALBARCZYK, A.: *W komunii ze słowem. Duchowość kaznodziei*, [in:] *Iustitiam in caritate. Opuscula Georgio Troska septuagenario dedicata*, edited by D. Bryl, F. Lenort, Poznań 2012, pp 201-211.

²⁴ PANUŚ, K.: *Kazania w kulturze polskiej. Edycje kolekcji tematycznych*, t. 1: *Kazania maryjne*, t. 2: *Kazania funeralne*, t. 3: *Kazania pasyjne*, Kraków 2014.

²⁵ SIWEK, G.: *Miejsce retoryki w homiletyce*, [in:] *Retoryka dziś. Teoria i praktyka*, edited by W. Przyczyna, Kraków 2001, pp 283-300.

²⁶ SZEWCZYK, L.: *Złoty środek kaznodziejstwa. O ciągłym napięciu między formą i treścią przepowiadania słowa Bożego*, „Polonia Sacra” 14 (2010), pp 53-66.

dialogue in preaching²⁷, language of preaching²⁸, literary character of the contemporary preaching²⁹, phonetic competence of a preacher³⁰ and many other detailed issues related to a formal homiletics³¹. For a few years it is possible to observe interest in the issues of rhetoric dimension of preaching the word of God³².

3.4 Evangelisation function of preaching

One of the most important tasks of the contemporary pastoral ministry is the primary zeal and apostolic passion for preaching that is to be once again evoked in preaching the word of God. These are social and cultural changes of the contemporary world that contribute to the need of a process of a constant renewal of preaching and adjusting it to the requirements of the new evangelisation. The issue of the new evangelisation is also analysed by Polish homiletics scholars. The issue was especially surveyed by Stanisław Dyk³³. There are also other Polish homiletics scholars who deal with the issue of preaching the word of God in the context of the new evangelisation³⁴.

Parish missions and retreats still remain an important mean of renewal of religious life in Poland, for they enrich faith and internal life of individual members of the Church and the entire parish community. The subject of preaching the word of God during missions and retreats in Polish homiletics was analysed especially by Gerard Siwek³⁵.

3.5 Didactics of homiletics

On the basis of observations and surveys conducted among students of Polish homiletics scholars formulate postulates concerning further renewal of homiletic education of future preachers. Contemporary didactics postulates a systematic withdrawal from methods based on teaching ready-made knowledge and promotes problem-solving and practical methods. This is related to active ways of teaching that do not focus on gathering information, understanding it and learning it by

²⁷ TUROWSKI, W.: *Komunikacja słowa Bożego a komunikat zwrotny*, „Roczniki Teologii Katolickiej” (2011), pp 144-160.

²⁸ PRZYCZYNA, W.: *O języku kazań i nie tylko*, „Materiały Homiletyczne” (2006) nr 231, pp 34-39.

²⁹ SIKORA, J.: *Literackość współczesnych kazań polskich*, Warszawa 2008.

³⁰ SZEWCZYK, L.: *Znaczenie terapii logopedycznej w kształceniu kaznodziejów*, „Logopedia Silesiana” 1 (2012), pp 82-89.

³¹ CHRZANOWSKI, D.: *Wybrane kompozycje homilii*, [in:] *Jak przepowiadać dziś? Głoszenie Słowa Bożego w służbie chrześcijańskiej wiary*, edited by S. Dyk, W. Czupryński, Olsztyn 2014, pp 97-109; TWARDY, J.: *Obrazowanie w kaznodziejskim głoszeniu słowa Bożego*, „Przegląd Homiletyczny” (2013), pp 31-46.

³² SIWEK, G.: *Retoryka w procesie kształcenia kaznodziejów*, [in:] *Integralne kształcenie kaznodziei*, edited by BRÓŃSKI, W., Lublin 2006, pp 319-333.

³³ DYK, S.: *Duch – Słowo – Kościół. Biblijny model ewangelizacji*, Lublin 2007; idem, *Nowa ewangelizacja – konkretne wezwanie*, Gubin 2015.

³⁴ LEWEK, A.: *Nowa ewangelizacja*, [in:] *Leksykon Teologii*, edited by R. Kamiński, Lublin 2006, r. 575-579; SZEWCZYK, L.: *Kaznodziejstwo w służbie nowej ewangelizacji*, [in:] *Nowa ewangelizacja wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce*, edited by B. Biela, Katowice 2011, pp 293-314.

³⁵ SIWEK, G.: *Misje ludowe. Historia – teologia – praktyka*, Kraków 2009; idem, *Rekolekcje wczoraj i dziś*, Kraków 2011.

heart, but rather on research and discovering new information. Therefore also in didactics of homiletics lectures should be systematically modified towards problem-solving activities and conversation classes, which are designed to let students acquire knowledge by themselves and make them active and creative in their approach to various issues. Lately it was Włodzimierz Broński who dealt with the issues enumerated above³⁶. Also there were some other homiletics scholars who dealt with the issue of homiletic formation³⁷.

4 Conclusions and postulates concerning Polish homiletics

There has been a systematic development of Polish homiletic thought lately. Academic theses are matured and numerous. However, one of the biggest shortcomings of Polish homiletics, which by the way refers to the entire Polish theology, is its almost total absence on the international theological market. The opinion that Polish theology, including theology of preaching, lacks interesting and original achievements seems to be unfair. As Polish theologians rightly observe the major reason of the absence of Polish theology in international papers is a language barrier. Translated summaries added to scientific texts do not convey the entire message presented in a published work. Another reason for the absence of Polish homiletic thought is relatively small number of published texts in Western periodicals³⁸.

A critical analysis of works of Polish homiletics scholars encourages us to formulate specific postulates concerning the future of Polish homiletics. We can see the need to carry out research into reception of the Church's teaching on preaching the word of God in Polish preaching practice. The teaching on a primary role of a homily and its mistagogical and Christocentric dimension should be systematically strengthened. Research into a broadly understood homiletic anthropology with a special emphasis on a new rhetoric should be continued. In the light of social and cultural conditions a program should be devised concerning a permanent homiletic formation of priests.

It seems that another research issue that Polish homiletic scholars are to study is preaching the word of God in a society undergoing a gradual secularisation. Preaching the word of God should be focused mainly on the religious and moral matters, on the other hand, however, it should take into account social, economical and cultural changes. It is necessary to diagnose the contemporary reality by defining obstacles that make it difficult for the preached word to reach contemporary listeners. A real challenge for the existing style of pastoral ministry and preaching are secularisation processes that are in progress in Poland. In the Polish society the secularisation processes are not as advanced and deep as in the majority of Western

³⁶ BROŃSKI, W.: (ed.), *Integralne kształcenie kaznodziei*, Lublin 2006; idem, *Formacja homiletyczna alumnów w wyższych seminariach duchownych w Polsce. Studium homiletyczne*, Lublin 2007

³⁷ SZEWCZYK, L.: *Dydaktyka homiletyki*, [in:] *Dydaktyka teologii*, edited by K. Sosna, Katowice 2006, pp 81-90; TWARDY, J.: *Kształcenie kaznodziei twórczego*, [in:] *Integralne kształcenie kaznodziei*, edited by BROŃSKI, W. Lublin 2006, pp 105-119.

³⁸ KOCHANIEWICZ, B.: *Teologia polska oczami rzymianina*, „Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne” 29(2015), pp 239-248.

European countries. This specificity of the Polish experience calls for setting up rules thanks to which the ministry of the Church will be effective for listeners.

In almost every Polish publication in the field of theology of preaching the word of God apart from Polish academic sources there are numerous references to works of foreign homiletics scholars writing mainly in German, Italian, and lately in English. Let us hope that Polish homiletic thought will be recognised abroad, too.

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