Research Article

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Preaching the communication strategy of the Catholic Church in the age of the House of Wettin in Poland. Ways of shaping social religious concepts

<https://doi.org/10.1515/openps-2019-0011>

received October 15, 2019; accepted November 29, 2019.

Abstract: In the first half of the 18th century, the position of the Catholic Church in the Commonwealth was strengthened and it dominated other Christian denominations. The network of the parishes was expanded, and the accessibility to churches improved. New forms of saints cult as well as other forms of piety had developed. The preaching played an important role in this process. The preaching in the Commonwealth was not just a Sunday sermon, but above all sermons related to homiletics of the late Baroque, connected with religious ceremonies eg. funerals. The preacher was to work through emotions, the achievements of Baroque rhetoric used, although in the Commonwealth, own solutions were developed to enable effective communication with the recipient representing the Old Polish culture. The size of this impact was significant, as evidenced by numerous prints dating back to that period, but also manuscripts with recorded places of preaching, or impressions from preaching preserved in memoirs or correspondence. It should be emphasized that the sermons not only carved the system of moral values or the piety of the society, but also influenced the ideas of everyday life, the roles of individual and groups in society, as well as the relation to authority

Keywords: communication strategy; mentality; the Catholic Church

In the first half of the 18th century, the position of the Catholic Church in Poland strengthened since it had dominated other Christian denominations (orthodox and protestant). This was a consequence of phenomena taking place in the 17th century, especially at the end of the century. New ways of the clergy influencing people arose along with bringing them closer to the Church's structures.

The network of Catholic parishes developed, and accessibility to a parish or monastery church improved. The specifics of this phenomenon were well illustrated by a situation that arose in Poland, as a consequence of these long-term transformations, shortly before the partitions around 1772. In its eight western dioceses, where the Catholics dominated (chełmińska, gnieźnieńska, krakowska, łódzka, poznańska, wrocławska, warszawska, wrocławska), there was one parish church per 62 km² and, taking into account chapels of ease, there was one church per 36km². One should bear in mind that there were large local differences connected with the population density of particular areas. The situation looked different in the west of the country where the influences of the Latin order inter-fused with the Greek order within the Catholic Church (the orthodox church played marginal role then). In these vast areas in eleven Roman Catholic dioceses there were 1305 parishes (altogether there were 1877 churches), whereas in eight Greek Catholic dioceses there were 9452 parishes. One should remember here that the further east one went the number of

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Roman Catholic parishes often dropped to a symbolic form, although there remained the Orthodox church's parish network¹.

Another element connected with the process of strengthening the structure of the Catholic Church in Poland, which ought to be mentioned, was the systematically growing number of newly founded monasteries and other conventual houses throughout the country. As a result, the greatest development of Catholic monasteries in the history of Poland took place just before the first partition of Poland in 1772 and is connected with the dissolution of the Jesuits. This coincided with the period of the Wettin dynasty. In 1771, in an area of 720 000 km² that constituted the area of Poland, there were 870 monasteries and houses that belonged to 26 monastic orders. They were inhabited by 12 500 monks and seminary students. Although in comparison to western countries at the same time the number was small: Portugal had 900 monasteries and conventual houses; and Spain around 3200. While these numbers do not seem large it must be remembered that Roman Catholics were a minority in Poland, the history of monasticism elsewhere, and there was a lower level of urbanisation in Poland.

One should add that as a result of the Church's institutional activity, changes were taking place in terms of religiousness; new and old religious cults were developing as were new forms of devotion. Monasteries, in particular, promoted practices connected with devotion². Some of them were borrowed from Western Europe where new forms of devotion were being popularised, for example: Christology devotions, such as popularised by the Franciscan the Way of the Cross or the Sacred Heart devotion. Taking Marian devotion as an example we see the practice of the building Loretto chapels by the Franciscans.

The importance of religious hymns was growing, which was crucial for effective communication with the congregations coming from lower social classes. In the 16th century, under the influence of the Polish Primate Stanisław Hozjusz, the development of folk religiousness was limited by means of hymns sung in the national language. This idea was reverted to in the 17th century but only in the Saxon period do we observe a dynamic increase in the popularity of religious hymns as means of shaping the religiousness of the lower social classes. Undoubtedly, this situation was influenced by social pressure. One should emphasise here that the lyrics were often based on folk motifs, they were composed by laymen, monks, teachers, or even clergy. As a result, hymns connected with the biggest celebrations of the liturgical year, Christmas and Easter, such as carols and pastorals were sung not only in churches or during services, but also often at home³.

There was also a dynamic growth in the number of sanctuaries of varying importance. In addition to large, national centres such as Częstochowa, regional centres mainly connected with Marian devotion were becoming more important. Some of the important places that combined eastern and western religious traditions can be mentioned: Sokal, Baerdyczów, Lviv. Very surprising is the large number of small, local sanctuaries and connected with them strong folk religiousness, sometimes leading to the formation of devotion centres negated by the church's hierarchy.

At that time folk missions were gaining popularity. They were mainly organised by monks: the Jesuits and the Missionaries (Order of Missionaries St. Vincent a Paulo) developing particularly in the second half of the 18th century. It is worth adding that along with the revival of print (following its breakdown in the second half of the 17th c.) and the activities of printing houses (publishing houses) devotional writing⁴ was becoming more popular. As a result, we may assume that the flow of material was increasing and impacting wider groups of recipients.

Within the communication strategy of the Catholic Church, preaching was to play an important part in the shaping of religious ideas. Preaching meant not only Sunday and holiday sermons, but also occasional sermons connected with late baroque homiletics, during religious ceremonies of important social significance, such as funerals. Since the preacher's message derives impact from its emotional force, European Baroque achievements in rhetoric were used, although in Poland particular local solutions had been worked out enabling effective communication with a recipient

1 S. Litak, *Parafie w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI-XVIII w.*, Lublin 2004, p. 57-59; B. Szady, *Geografia struktur religijnych i wyznaniowych w Koronie II połowie XVIII w.*, Lublin 2010; J. Kracik, *Duszpasterstwo parafialne w dekanacie Nowa Góra w pierwszej połowie XVIII w.*, [in:] *Studia kościelno-historyczne*, vol. 2, Lublin 1977, p. 196-214.

2 E. Janicka, *Praktyki religijne w archidiecezji lubelskiej w XVIII w.*, „Summarius”, 14 (1963-1964), s. 214-217; J. Bendyk, *Życie sakramentalne i paraliiturgiczne w diecezji krakowskiej w okresie rządów kardynała J. A. Lipskiego (1732-1746)*, „Analecta Cracoviensia”, 17 (1985), p. 453-492.

3 Z. Wit, *Pieśń nabożna w potrydenckich procesjonatach i rytuałach polskich*, „Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne”, 21 (1974), n. 6, p. 113-127; T. Sinka, *Polska pieśń w liturgii (od pocz. XIV w.)*, „Nasza Przyszłość”, 60 (1983), p. 235-273; S. Litak, *Parafie*, p. 382-383.

4 B. Rok, *Piśmiennictwo dewocyjne czasów nowożytnych jako źródło historyczne*, [in:] *Źródła kultury umysłowej w Europie Środkowej ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Górnego Śląska*, ed. A. Barciak, Katowice 2005, p. 36-43.

at one with the culture of Old Polish society. The scale of this impact was significant, which is confirmed by numerous old prints from that period, manuscripts with notes on the places where sermons had been preached, and traces of comments on sermons found in journals and correspondence. More importantly, by means of these sermons not only were the moral value systems and religiousness of contemporary society built, but also, ideas concerning everyday life, the family, the role of the individual and other groups in society, the approach to the authorities, and the important issues of life and death, and as a result eschatology.

One important and topical subject presented in the Church's teaching was the family. References to family were of great significance in creating a universal communication platform allowing for the crossing of cultural barriers and reaching recipients of various communication competences, e.g.: simple recipients of a relatively low degree identifying themselves with the Church⁵, with a message about Christian values. Undoubtedly, preachers appreciated the significance of this topic and used references to the family in order to shape in their listeners and readers patterns concerning both the family and the institution of marriage conveying an understanding of Church doctrine, and also the roles assigned to father, mother and children. The differentiation of social roles resulting from the place assigned in society to men and women was also significant⁶. The family was sacralised as part of God's order, which made this subject strong and suggestive resulting, among others, from the significance that this element of the preacher's message had for the fellowship of believers. The function of preaching devoted to the family was directed at regulating and stabilising the social order, showing its members the place they occupied in it and its deep validation.

With the development of Old Polish homiletic culture came the search for a different conceptualisation for the subject of family in preaching. Some forms had already functioned in the 16th century, such as funeral preaching or other occasional forms, which developed later. The platforms available for the message concerning family, were the Sunday and holiday sermons during liturgical year, where at Christmas, the Epiphany, or on a particular Sunday the gospel passage made references to family. A significantly important complement to this aspect of preaching constitute Passion sermons, which emphasised the suffering of a mother losing her son, referring to the exceptionally vivid topic connected with the way of the cross and the image of Passion.

In this case, it seems that the most important aspect was the emphasis on the roles of mother and son, which were supported by Marian devotion where the soteriological dimension of Jesus's mission corresponded with Mary's sacrifice, as his earthly mother. This emphasis boosted the position of women not only in a religious context. In the opinion of Maria Bogucka, Marian devotion was to have a deep impact on the whole culture of Poland's catholic society and, as in other countries where Roman Catholicism dominated, the position of women was to be stronger than in protestant circles⁷. The apologia of the mother and son relationship present in catholic preaching was manifested both in Sunday, holiday and occasional preaching and had deeply paraenetic goals in pastoral practices. It strongly influenced the sphere of social concepts, and the strength of the message was supported by Marian devotion which culminated in the 18th century practice of the crowning of paintings⁸ and a very dynamic development of Marian devotion centres which often transformed into sanctuaries of varying degrees of impact. The Marian devotion corresponded with other religious forms that affirmed the role of the mother. An example of such a movement is St. Anne's devotion, whom preachers regularly referred to in the collections of holiday sermons⁹. This interest was dictated by the role of the saint as a patron of motherhood and mothers and widows. Women suffering from infertility searched for comfort in this devotion and preachers referred to the example of St. Anne, whose faithfulness to God was rewarded by conceiving a child and being

5 A. Piotrowski, *O pojęciu kompetencji komunikatywnej*, [in:] *Zagadnienia socjo- i psycholingwistyki*, ed. A. Schaff, Wrocław 1980, p. 91-109.

6 See: E. Głazewska, *Płeć i antropologia. Kulturowa koncepcja płci w ujęciu Margaret Mead*, Toruń 2005; H.L. Moore, *Płeć kulturowa i status – wyjaśnienie sytuacji kobiety*, [in:] *Badanie kultury. Elementy teorii antropologicznej*, ed. M. Kempny, E. Nowicka, Warszawa 2003, p. 309-339.

7 M. Bogucka, *Kobieta w społeczeństwie polskim XVI–XVII w.*, [in:] *Pamiętnik XV Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich – Przemiany społeczne a model rodziny*, ed. A. Żarnowska, vol. 2, Gdańsk-Toruń 1995, p. 3-15.

8 First coronation of Marian performance took place in Częstochowa in 1717, later over the whole century there were twenty six more acts. See: Bartoszewicz J., *Koronacje obrazów świętych*, [in:] J. Bartoszewicz, *Szkice z czasów saskich*, Kraków 1980, p. 197-217.

9 F. Birkowski, *Kazania na niedziele i święta doroczne [...] Na święta przedniejsze po dwojgu kazań [...]*, Kraków 1620; T. Młodzianowski, *Kazania i homilie na niedziele doroczne także święta uroczystsze dla większej chwały Boga Króla Królów, Najjaśniejszej na zawsze Królowej Polskiej Boga Rodzicy Panny [...]*, t. 1–4, Poznań 1681; M. Grabowski, *Godziny kaznodziejskie w niedziele całego roku nieszporem kazaniem wymierzone pod imieniem J.W. Najprzewielebniejszego w Bogu JMci ks. Hieronima Stefana Turno opata przemęckiego, J.K.M. sekretarza, prowincji wielkopolskiej, małopolskiej, ruskiej, pruskiej i W. Ks. L. komisarza generalnego etc. prześwieconego domu klejnotami jako indeksami [...]* pokazane [...], Poznań 1747.

chosen for a significant mission in God's plan¹⁰. Such conceptualisation also emphasised another important aspect of the women's role in history seen from a biblical perspective; the significance in the providentialistic vision of history, where without women's sacrifice and faith, the plan of Providence could not have been fulfilled. References to social roles connected with the family can also be found in an important category of the Old Polish preaching in carol sermons.

In a similar way role models and cultural models were built with reference to the family model in funeral sermons, despite the strong formalisation and schematism important for the noble elites of Old Polish society¹¹. References to the family and the house were one of the most important elements of such preaching due to the funeral's assumed commemorative character. The family, in this case, was not to be an abstract sermon construct, even if it was used in reference to heraldic legends and where its history constituted justification for its social position, rather it was to prove the permanence of assent received by the deceased's predecessors from Providence. The past, the predecessors' merits and achievements, and in particular the immaculate moral attitude presented in this panegyric way were to assure recipients in their conviction about the special role which the dead person's descendants were to play. Nobility was a value inasmuch as one could maintain his way of virtue, not only in the social sphere but also individually¹². The preacher had a duty to present the dead in such a way as to console the recipients and assure them of salvation, the highest Christian value. Hence, the building of a picture of good Christian men and women who through their devotion deserved to commune with God.

The model of virtuous life built by a preacher also involved the ideal of the good son or daughter, husband and wife, father and mother. Regardless of children's gender they should be brought up in a Christian way in the Catholic spirit. A peculiar ideal was for the child to enter the priesthood. Parents were obliged, in the case of boys, to ensure a knightly upbringing for them to become the defenders of their motherland, providing education whilst stressing the value of foreign education, and finally, if possible, introducing them into the public realm. In the case of girls, most important was to be their ability to become an obedient and submissive wife. Religiousness was also valued, which guaranteed purity and devotion to the Church. The role of parents was to provide good husbands for their daughters for whom the preacher was obliged to thank the deceased on behalf of the offspring. Fulfilling the above-mentioned duties towards the children, the parents could leave relying on their gratitude, and the preacher was to symbolically bless the deceased descendants on his/her behalf. This sign was a particular symbol of the good relationships between the living and the dead, and agreement, in this case, also meant problem free succession.

A separate issue concerned the relationships between husband and wife. It was common to rhetorically emphasise the symbolic friendship between the spouses. The ideal of a caring man was formed, one who would seek to provide security and abundance for his wife and religious matron, whose obedience towards her husband could have been treated as an expression of her devotion and fulfilling of the Church's commandments in marriage. An important aspect of a successful marriage was maternity, treated as a sign of blessing, which was stressed especially when drawing the life path of dead women. In some sermons, there appeared three stages of a woman's life: maidenhood, marriage and widowhood¹³. In turn, the sacramental character of a couples' relationship emphasised the fulfilment by spouses of their life's duties.

10 F. Birkowski, *Kazania na niedziele i święta doroczne [...] Na święta przedniejsze po dwojgu kazań [...]*, Kraków 1620; T. Młodzianowski, *Kazania i homilie na niedziele doroczne także święta uroczystsze dla większej chwały Boga Króla Królów, Najjaśniejszej na zawsze Królowej Polskiej Boga Rodzicy Panny [...]*, vol. 1-4, Poznań 1681; M. Grabowski, *Godziny kaznodziejskie w niedziele całego roku nieszporem kazaniami wymierzone pod imieniem J.W. Najprzewielebniejszego w Bogu JMci ks. Hieronima Stefana Turno opata przemęckiego, J.K.M. sekretarza, prowincji wielkopolskiej, małopolskiej, ruskiej, pruskiej i W. Ks. L. komisarza generalnego etc. prześwieconego domu klejnotami jako indeksami [...]*, Poznań 1747.

11 See: B. Rok, *Człowiek wobec śmierci w kulturze staropolskiej*, Wrocław 1995; the same, *Druki żałobne w dawnej Polsce XVI–XVIII w.*, [in:] *Wesela, chrzciny i pogrzeby w XVI–XVIII wieku. Kultura życia i śmierci*, red. H. Suchojad, Warszawa 2001, p. 187-201; D. Platt, *Kazania pogrzebowe z przełomu XVI i XVII w. Z dziejów prozy staropolskiej*, Wrocław 1992; M. Skwara, *O dowodzeniu retorycznym w polskich drukowanych oracjach pogrzebowych XVII w.*, Szczecin 1999; M. Skwara, *Polskie drukowane oracje pogrzebowe XVII wieku. Bibliografia*, Gdańsk 2009.

12 S. Baczewski, *Propagandowa rola szlacheckiego pogrzebu z XVII wieku w świetle kazań pogrzebowych*, [in:] *Wesela, chrzciny i pogrzeby w XVI–XVIII wieku. Kultura życia i śmierci*, red. H. Suchojad, Warszawa 2001, p. 203-216; the same, *Szlachectwo. Studium z dziejów idei w piśmiennictwie polskim. Druga połowa XVI–XVII w.*, Lublin 2009.

13 A. Seriewicz, *Szczęśliwy doczesnego wiekopomnej i nieśmiertelnej chwały życia Pomian albo Mutacja to jest herbowna ś.p. J.W. JMci Pani P. Zofii z Makowieckich Stadnickiej, kasztelanowej belskiej głowa lubo mieczem śmiertelnym zraniona z wola jednak boska w trojakim stanie w życiu oraz i przy śmierci zgadzająca się na wieki zdrowa kaznodziejskim żalosnemu audytorowi na pociechę, z kolligowanym Domom na wieczną konsolację w opryszowskim kościele na tejsze pogrzebie reprezentowana, a na zaszczyt i memoriał wieczny nieugaszanej pamięci, na ochłodzenie*

Normative patterns that determined in the preaching the place of the man and the woman in the family could be combined with a way of interpreting their role in contemporary society. In the preaching message concerning women, it is important to notice the sacralisation of the main roles assigned to them: maiden-daughter, wife-mother, and finally widow, treated in accordance with rhetoric tradition as a symbolic picture of the three stages of a woman's life. In the case of men, the pattern of a good father, a devout Christian and a Noble man-landlord-landowner was stressed, who was able to become, if needed, a defender of his motherland. Both in the case of men and women, Nobility apology played an important role.

One should stress here that in Old Polish preaching the family was treated as a fellowship of Christians, Catholics. The family was systematically sacralised, which was not only an offshoot of the Church's doctrine and its communication strategy but was conditioned by the culture of Polish society, and as a result, its religious mentality¹⁴. Stressed also was its importance as a structure that could shape various forms of devotion as a way to family members achieving the salvation promoted as the highest value. The significance of the family for society was also appreciated, especially in the case of a Noble family guarding its memory. One can risk the thesis that preaching confirms and well depicts the exceptional significance and high ranking of a family in the axiology of Old Polish society.

Summary

In the first half of the 18th century, the position of the Catholic Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was strengthened and it dominated other Christian denominations (Orthodoxy and Protestant churches). The network of the parish was expanded, and the accessibility to the parish or monastic church improved. Old and new forms of saint's cults as well as other forms of piety had developed. The preaching played an important role in this process, as it shaped the religious ideas. The preaching in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was not just a sermon on Sundays and festivals, but above all occasional sermons related to homiletics of the late Baroque, connected with religious ceremonies ex. funerals. The message of the preacher was to work through the emotions, the achievements of European Baroque rhetoric were used, although in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, own solutions were developed to enable effective communication with the recipient representing the Old Polish culture. The size of this impact was undoubtedly significant, as evidenced by numerous old prints dating back to that period, but also manuscripts with recorded places of preaching, or impressions from preaching preserved in memoirs or correspondence. It should be emphasized that the sermons not only carved the system of moral values or the piety of the society, but also influenced the ideas of everyday life, the family, the roles of individual and various groups in society, as well as the relationship with authority, important issues such as attitude towards life and death, and in the consequences of eschatology.

zemdlonego serca, w Szreniawie lokowana, i godnemu imieniowi J.W. JMć Pana P. Jana z Żmigroda Stadnickiego chorążego grabowieckiego etc. etc. z dozwoleniem starszych dedykowana [...], Lwów 1740., c. ev.

¹⁴ S. Litak, *Ze studiów nad religijnością niższych warstw społecznych w Rzeczypospolitej w XVIII w.*, „Przegląd Humanistyczny”, 40 (1996), n. 1, p. 163-173; T. Wilicz, *Religijność wiejska w Rzeczypospolitej szlacheckiej: problemy i trzy przybliżenia*, Barok, 11 (2004) n. 2, p. 97-118; H. Suchojad, *Mentalność religijna szlachty małopolskiej w drugiej połowie XVII w.*, [in:] *Pamiętnik Świętokrzyski. Studia z dziejów kultury chrześcijańskiej*, ed. L. Kaczanowskiego, Kielce 1991, p. 123-137.