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OBLICZA ŚWIĘTOŚCI OTTONA Z BAMBERGU I PŁYNĄCE Z NICH PRZESŁANIA DLA WSPÓŁCZESNYCH LUDZI

THE FACES OF HOLINESS OF OTTO OF BAMBERG AND THE MESSAGES FROM THEM FOR CONTEMPORARY PEOPLE

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego przedłożenia było ukazanie wartości postawy świętości Ottona z Bambergu dla współczesnego pokolenia ludzi. Realizacja tak określonego celu nie mogła nie rozpocząć się od odsłonięcia uwarunkowań nadprzyrodzonych świętości, tj. Bożego powołania człowieka do niej, i tych naturalnych, tj. świadomości tego Boskiego zaproszenia ze strony Ottona. Następnym krokiem w realizacji celu było zaprezentowanie responsoryjnego wymiaru powołania do świętości, czyli ukazaniu Ottonowej odpowiedzi na to powołanie. W zakres tej odpowiedzi ze strony Ottona weszły: ofiarna posługa Chrystusowi w Jego Kościele, wrażliwość na bliźnich i wierność osobistej godności i powierzonej misji. Te trzy elementy stanowiły formy pełnienia przez Ottona powołania do świętości. Ich odsłonięcie pozwoliło na uwypuklenie płaszczyzn jego oddziaływania na współczesne działania ludzi w społeczeństwie. W tym względzie wpływu jego postawy świętości można upatrywać we wskazaniu na podstawę wszelkiego ładu w społeczeństwie i jedności w Kościele, jakim jest wierność Chrystusowej Ewangelii, w okazywaniu wsparcia ludziom w potrzebie jako wymiaru świadectwa o Chrystusie i w otwartości w duchu dialogu na ludzi, którzy wyznają inną wiarę i kierują się odmiennym światopoglądem jako podstawy wprowadzania między nimi pokoju. Właśnie w tych płaszczyznach zawiera się aktualność duchowości Ottona z Bambergu.

Słowa kluczowe: duchowość, powołanie, świętość, wierność Chrystusowi, jedność Kościoła

Abstract

THE FACES OF HOLINESS OF OTTO OF BAMBERG AND THE MESSAGES FROM THEM FOR CONTEMPORARY PEOPLE

The aim of this presentation was to show the value of the holiness of Otto of Bamberg for the modern generation of people. The implementation of such a goal could not fail to begin with the disclosure of the supernatural conditions of holiness, i.e. the Divine vocation of man to it and the natural ones, i.e.

the awareness of this Divine invitation on the part of Otto. The next step in achieving the goal was to present the responsorial dimension of the call to holiness, i.e. to show the Otto's response to this call. The Otto's response included: his sacrificial service to Christ in his Church, his sensitivity to his fellow man, and his faithfulness to his personal dignity and the mission entrusted to him. These three elements were the forms of Otto's call to holiness. The unveiling of these three elements of Otto's attitude to holiness made it possible to highlight the planes of his influence on the contemporary actions of people in society. In this regard, the influence of his attitude of holiness can be seen in pointing to the basis of all order in society and unity in the Church, which is fidelity to Christ's Gospel, in showing support to people in need as a dimension of witness to Christ and in openness in a spirit of dialogue to people who profess a different faith and are guided by a different worldview as the basis for establishing peace between them. It is in these planes that the spirituality of Otto of Bamberg is topical.

Keywords: spirituality, vocation, holiness, fidelity to Christ, unity of the Church.

Introduction

The approaching anniversary of the 900th anniversary (in 2024) of the evangelization mission of Bishop Otto of Bamberg in Pomerania makes us reflect on his pastoral activity.

The person of Bishop Otto of Bamberg and his evangelization mission in Pomerania in the 12th century were of interest to many researchers. The result of this was various publications issued over the centuries and years. It is impossible to list them all in this presentation, as it would distort its structure, but it is enough to mention at least some of them to reveal the area of interest of researchers in the question of Otto of Bamberg's mission. Using the criterion of the date of such publications, some of them should be mentioned: Benedykt Zientara, "Political and ecclesiastical relations between Western Pomerania and Poland under Bolesław III Wrymouth", *Przegląd Historyczny* 61, 2 (1970): 192–232; Michał Chorzępa, "From Otto to Erasmus", *Presbytery* 6–8 (1974): 34–45; Władysław Dziewulski, "The course and methods of the mission of St. Otto of Bamberg in the years 1124–1128", *Scientific Papers of the PAX Association* 4 (1974): 38–47; Kazimierz Liman, *Herbord's Dialogue. From historical and literary studies on the Latin biography of the 12th century* (Poznań: UAM, 1975); Władysław Szulist, "Saint Otto of Bamberg", in: *Polish Saints*, vol. 5, edited by Jan R. Bar (Warsaw: ATK, 1985), 11–27; Gracjan Bojar-Fijałkowski, *Saint Otto of Bamberg* (Warsaw: ODiSS, 1986); Lech Fabianczyk, *Apostle of Pomerania* (Szczecin: Pomeranian Library, 2001); Grzegorz Wejman, "The Cult of St. Otto in Pomerania", in: *Saint Otto of Bamberg – Evangelizer of Pomerania. His cult until modern times*, edited by Grzegorz Wejman (Szczecin: Studia i Rozprawa – WT US 2, 2004), 33–77; Przemysław Fenrych, *Saint Otto. Bishop, missionary, European* (Szczecin: Foundation for the Development of Local Democracy Training Center, 2004); Edward Rymar, *The Holy Well, or the missionary work of*

the patron saint of Pyrzyce, St. Otto, Bishop of Bamberg, and the memory of him through the ages (Pyrzyce: Pyrzyce Public Library, 2006); Stanisław Rosik, *Conversio entis Pomeranorum. A Study of the Testimony of Events (XII)* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Chronicon, 2010); Franz Biermann, "Bischof Otto von Bamberg in Pommern – die Missionsreisen und ihre Wirkung im archäologischen Bild", in: *Bischof Otton von Bamberg in Pommern*, ed. Franz Biermann, Franz Ruchhoft (Bonn: Verlag Dr. Rudolf Habelt, 2017), 97–148; *Bishop Otto of Bamberg and his world*, edited by Marian Rębkowski, Stanisław Rosik (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Chronicon, 2018); Jerzy Strzelczyk, "Otto of Bamberg as Bishop of the Reich", in: *Bishop Otto of Bamberg and his world*, ed. Marian Rębkowski, Stanisław Rosik (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Chronicon, 2018), 109–117; Grzegorz Wejman, *Bishop Otto of Bamberg in the space of the Pomeranian Church* (Szczecin: Scientific Publishing House of the University of Szczecin, 2021). Each of these publications is oriented towards presenting a particular dimension of the life and mission of Bishop Otto of Bamberg. Some of them focus on showing the socio-political and church-state conditions of his mission, others on presenting his missionary achievements, and still others on presenting the development of his cult. Among them, however, the issue of his spiritual life, and specifically his desire for holiness, did not resound directly. Therefore, this dimension of his life became the focus of this submission. Its main goal will be to present Otto of Bamberg's pursuit of holiness. The source base for such a defined purpose will be the latest studies devoted to the activities of Otto of Bamberg, and the method will be the analysis of the content of these works.

As a consequence of the assumptions adopted in this way, the structure of the submission will consist of three parts that complement each other and at the same time emphasize the dynamic nature of holiness. The biographies of Otto of Bamberg show that he perceived holiness in a dynamic dimension. In his understanding, it consisted not so much in the virtuous fulfillment of personal tasks by man, but in his volitional commitment to God's endowment. Therefore, an attempt to bring his view of holiness closer cannot fail to begin with showing its supernatural conditions, i.e. pointing to its source, which is God's vocation of man to holiness. Otto was aware of this God's invitation to holiness (content of the first part of the presentation). He undertook them with courage and humility, which can be described from the methodological point of view as the responsorial dimension of the call to holiness. The scope of Otto's response to this vocation included: his sacrificial service to Christ in His Church, sensitivity to his neighbours and faithfulness to his personal dignity and mission entrusted.

These three components were the forms of his fulfillment of the call to holiness (content of the second part of the presentation). And only on this basis, i.e. the presentation of the dynamic nature of holiness that characterized the life and activities of Otto of Bamberg, it becomes possible to show the value of his attitude of holiness for the action of the modern generation of people and of the renovation of the whole world. The value of his attitude of holiness, and thus showing the relevance of his mission for his contemporaries, should be seen, in proportion to the above-presented forms of fulfilling the call to holiness, in three levels: in boundless fidelity to Christ, in sacrificial service to the needy being a testimony of Christ and in faithful fulfillment of the mission constituting the basis for introducing peace between people and nations (content of the third part of the presentation).

1. God's call to holiness

In contemporary theology, and above all theology of spirituality, there is a very well-known principle, the content of which is contained in the words: "before holiness is a virtue, it is first a grace." It is impossible not to refer to this principle and make it the basis in this part of the reflection, when an attempt is made to show the source of Otto of Bamberg's holiness. In the context of this principle, trying to expand its content, it should be admitted that God, in His infinite merciful love, endowed man with an immortal soul and thus allowed him to participate in his immaculate life, which made him his adopted child. This first love of God for man, expressed in the act of calling him into existence, is a kind of call and obligation at the same time. It is the natural basis of his vocation to holiness and thus obliges him, regardless of his worldview or religion, to the perfection of love in proportion to the dignity he has received. This principle in such a developed content can be applied to some extent to the life and activities of Otto of Bamberg. Although biographers do not directly indicate that Otto of Bamberg was aware of being endowed by God in the act of creation, this does not mean that he did not have such an approach to God's endowment. The hypothesis formulated in this way may be justified by the fundamental principle that an external attitude always reveals internal values. According to the accounts of Otto's biographers, he was a pious person, although he did not show a penchant for solitude or constant prayer at night. But on the other hand, he showed the will to remain in a prayerful relationship with God, as exemplified by his prayer for the release of a prisoner from Pomeranian captivity or the spiritual exercises held

for two days in the church in Szczecin while awaiting death¹. These behaviors on his part, visible to others, clearly indicate, in accordance with the above-mentioned principle, the inner richness of his relationship with God. His continued dialogue with Him in prayer would not have been possible if he had not been aware that God had given him His grace from the moment of creation. Otto adored God for the act of creation, which was manifested in his love of nature and, at the same time, his amazement at the sublimity of the dignity of every human being. Precisely on this plane, i.e. the natural endowment of man by God with existence, he was called to holiness. This was noticed by Otto of Bamberg, which was reflected in his acts of prayer and adoration of God in the works of nature.

After many centuries, this natural basis for man's vocation to holiness, which to some extent found expression in the life of Otto of Bamberg, was emphasized in a special way by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, who in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World unequivocally wrote that "man has been created by God for a happy purpose beyond the limit of earthly woe (...). God has called and calls man to cling to Him with all his nature in the eternal participation of immaculate life. (...) For it exists only because God created it out of love and keeps it in love, and lives fully in accordance with the truth when it freely acknowledges this love and entrusts itself to its Creator²". The current of this thought of the Council Fathers was inscribed in the statement of Fr. prof. Placyd Ogórek, who in his book devoted to the issue of holiness, stated that "holiness is a gift of God given to man on a path determined by God Himself³".

In addition to this natural premise of Otto's call to sainthood, one more premise can be seen in biographical records, namely his supernatural conditioning. According to contemporary theological thought, man is called to holiness not only because of creation, but also because God renewed in him the dignity of a child of God. It was God in the Holy Spirit who, through the sacrifice of Christ, restored to man the image of God lost through sin, and thus gave him the dignity of a son, and thus gave him the gift of holiness. This fact of God's endowment of man with holiness was clearly emphasized by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in the words: "Christ, the Son of God, who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is honored as "the only saint", loved the Church as his bride, giving himself up for her, that sanctify (cf. Eph 5:25–26); he also joined it to himself as his own body and

¹ Kazimierz Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1975), 106.

² Second Vatican Council, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium et Spes", in: Second Vatican Council, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations. Text Polish (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Pallottinum, 1967), 18–19.

³ Placyd Ogórek, *Czym jest świętość* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1982), 49.

generously endowed it with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God. Therefore, all in the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or are subject to its pastoral function, are called to holiness, in accordance with the words of the Apostle: "For your sanctification is the will of God" (1 Thess 4:3); (cf. Eph 1:4). This holiness of the Church is constantly revealed and should be revealed in the fruits of grace which the Spirit generates in the faithful; it is expressed in various ways in individual people who, in their proper state of life, strive for the perfection of love, being an edification for others⁴. Remaining a faithful continuator of the conciliar teachings, Fr. prof. Placyd Ogórek included the issue of supernatural conditioning of the vocation to holiness in a short synthesis: "this gift is given by Christ through the Holy Spirit⁵". According to the above messages, it must be said that the source of man's vocation to holiness is Christ, who by the power of the Holy Spirit gives him God's life, that is, sanctifies him. And in this regard, the gratuitousness of holiness is revealed, consisting in the fact that it is offered to man by Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of baptism celebrated by the Church.

From the perspective of contemporary theological thought in the presentation of the supernatural conditioning of the call to holiness, this premise also appeared in the life of Otto of Bamberg. Although it did not find the expression presented by contemporary theological messages, it actually functioned in its essence. The mentions of biographers about the evangelizing activity of Otto of Bamberg, in which he emphasized the power of the God of Christians and the powerlessness of pagan idols, and emphasized the value of baptism as the source of God's life, indirectly indicate his sense of being a child of God, and thus show that he was aware that it is God in Christ who gives him and every human being the gift of holiness⁶. On this basis, we can conclude that Otto was convinced of the disinterested action of God towards him and every human being, and at the same time he was convinced that they were allowed to participate in his intratrinitarian life, i.e. endowed with the gift of holiness.

Otto's sense of God's giving him the gift of holiness in the sacrament of baptism, constituting the content of the supernatural premise of calling to holiness, was significantly influenced by the educational work of his parents. His parents, Otto and Adelaide⁷, belonged

⁴ Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "Lumen Gentium"", in: Sobór Watykański II, *Konstytucje, dekryty, deklaracje*. Polish text (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Pallottinum, 1967), 39 (further CCL).

⁵ Ogórek, *Czym jest świętość*, 49.

⁶ Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 114.

⁷ Otto's parents were buried in the church in Albuch (now Bach): Edward Rymar, *Święta Studnia, czyli misyjne dzieło patrona Pyrzyce Św. Ottona biskupa pomorskiego i pamięć o nim poprzez wieki* (Pyrzyce: Wydawnictwo Pyrzycka Biblioteka Publiczna, 2006), 9

to a distinguished Swabian family and powerful European nobility, led a very pious lifestyle⁸. Their piety was expressed above all in boundless trust in God and guided by righteousness and nobility in everyday life⁹. They, being aware of being parents, instilled in their children, i.e. Otto, Liutfrid, Lentfrid and their half-brother Frederick¹⁰, the basic truths that God extends His care over every human being from the moment of creation and invites each of them through Christ in the Holy Spirit to that they open themselves to his grace and grow in holiness.

And in this dimension it becomes understandable that Otto was aware of his own dignity flowing not only from the act of creation by God, but also from the act of endowing him with divine infancy in the sacrament of baptism. Hence, he perceived God not only as the source and goal of life, but above all as a Person who, having given him existence in the act of creation and the gift of divine childhood in the act of baptism, cares for him and at the same time invites him to grow in holiness.

2. Responsorial dimension of the call to holiness

In the context of the conducted reflection, the contemporary theologian Father Placyd Ogórek included very significant words in his book dedicated to the issue of holiness that "holiness means not only giving participation in God's holiness, but also a response on the part of man"¹¹. In these words the author captured and expressed at the same time the essence of the dynamism of holiness. This dynamism is revealed in man's response to the gift of holiness offered to him by God in the act of creation and redemption. This response on the part of man is nothing more than his responsive approach to God's call to holiness. In the practice of life it will be expressed in moral actions on his part.

This contemporary theological and spiritual thought on holiness gives a certain incentive to try to look at the way Otto of Bamberg fulfilled the call to holiness. Since he was aware of God's endowment, which was shown in the first part of the reflection, this gives grounds to be able to claim that he behaved morally in accordance with this awareness, that is, he took specific actions towards God, his neighbours and the tasks entrusted to him. Therefore, the focus of this part of the reflection cannot fail to show, in the light of biographical records,

⁸ Grzegorz Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2021), 33.

⁹ Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 100.

¹⁰ Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła*, 34.

¹¹ Ogórek, *Czym jest świętość*, 75.

Otto's conduct in the aspect of his service to Christ in the Church, his attitude towards his neighbours and his approach to the mission entrusted to him.

2.1. Serving Christ in His Church

The first form of realization by Otto of the moral dimension of the call to holiness, which was his response to God's endowment in this regard, was his faithful service to Christ as the Head of the Church. His faithfulness to Him and boundless devotion to Him was revealed in a special way in the first place in his refusal to accept the episcopal dignity. In 1103 he was appointed Bishop of Bamberg by Emperor Henry IV. Ruthard of Mainz refused to recognize this appointment. Then Otto, distrusting the investiture given to him by the secular ruler, made its acceptance conditional on the pope's decision. He waited almost three years for his episcopal consecration. At the end of 1105, he received confirmation from the Pope and finally, in May 1106, he was ordained bishop by Pope Paschal II and took over the rule of the Diocese of Bamberg. This situation showed, on the one hand, Otto's loyalty to the secular ruler, and on the other hand, showed his faithfulness and devotion to the pope and the cause of the Church¹².

Another gesture of his faithful dedication to Christ in the Church was placing a ring and crosier at the feet of Pope Paschal II, along with confessing his own unworthiness. In this gesture, he showed his boundless obedience to Christ, who located authority in his Church in the person and ministry of the pope. Otto emphasized this attitude of serving Christ in a special way in the act of ingress into the Bamberg cathedral. According to biographers, he entered it barefoot and sick¹³. The cited facts unambiguously reveal his deep trust in Christ in His Church.

Otto also expressed his fidelity to Christ in his readiness for cooperation between the Church authorities and secular authorities. The purpose of this readiness was to care for the Church. His concern for the Church, and mainly for the Diocese of Bamberg, took on an unusual form when compared to the desires of other bishops, such as Bishop Albert of Trier or Archbishop Konrad of Salzburg. They tried by force or by violating the laws of God and men to secure territorial gains and power in the Reich and thus defend the Church. Otto took a different approach. All goods that were supposed to guarantee the security of the diocese were acquired by purchase, and he exercised his episcopal authority through dialogue, never by

¹² Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 118.

¹³ Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła*, 48.

violence. An example of such behavior on his part was the decision to convert the arrowheads, instruments of death brought to him, into hooks, which were to be used to cover the roof of the monastery of St. Michael, or his skillful mediation between Duke Bolesław III Wrymouth and the Pomeranians in order to bring about peace between them¹⁴.

As a bishop, Otto also expressed his concern for the Church in the construction of churches and monasteries, as well as towns and castles. The only motivation that guided him in this activity was to ensure the safety of people and the protection of the surrounding church property. It was with this intention that he purchased Albuinestein¹⁵. Based on the presented facts, it must be stated that Otto was a faithful servant of Christ and an obedient son of the Church, energetically managing the church goods in the diocese and open to dialogue with secular rulers. As far as this last feature is concerned, it must be said that in the face of secular power he adopted the evangelical attitude of giving to God what was divine and to Caesar what was Caesar's (cf. Mk 12:17). He never collaborated with it politically, although he enjoyed the respect of, for example, the German Emperor Henry IV, who entrusted him with the supervision of the construction of the cathedral in Speyer and prayed psalms with him, and was favored by the Polish princes Bolesław III Wrymouth and Władysław Herman¹⁶.

The conducted analyzes allow us to draw the conclusion that Otto's responsive approach to God's call to holiness, i.e. his moral face of holiness, was revealed on his part in the boundless submission to the will of Christ, sacrificial obedience to the Church, expressed in observance of orthodoxy and responsible care for church goods, and in loyalty to secular authority.

2.2. Sensitivity to neighbours

Another expression of Otto's moral holiness was his deep concern for his fellow men. He expressed his attitude of openness to their needs and readiness to deal with them in various forms. Therefore, it is impossible not to recall specific behavior on his part in this matter. According to the accounts of his biographers, for example, during the famine years, i.e. around 1125, he took care of the poor and abandoned from the Bamberg diocese and other parts of Germany, providing them with bread, and during the harvest he gave them sickles. At

¹⁴ Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 119–120; Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła*, 52–53.

¹⁵ Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 118.

¹⁶ Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 119; Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła*, 53.

other times, he showed his sensitivity to the needy by buying prisoners from captivity, and at other times he was able, contrary to the opinion of the environment, to treat a paralytic with a bed cover, and to give fish to the poor during Lent, which cost a lot¹⁷. There are also other gestures of his merciful approach to the needy, such as giving a poor person a fur coat that he personally considered too expensive, or his charity work in Bamberg for the poor, widows, orphans and those affected by an incurable disease, and financially supporting the poorhouses located in in the diocese of Bamberg. In order to show the depth and fullness of Otto's merciful attitude, it is necessary to recall the acts of his direct and humble actions towards his fellow men. At one time, according to biographers, he ministered to the monks at the table and at the altar, at other times he carried the decomposing corpse of a woman, and at another time he buried the dead in the years of famine¹⁸. The scope of Otto's merciful attitude towards other people extends even further to his concern for the spiritual future of the faithful in the places of the evangelization mission he carried out earlier. Everywhere he evangelized in Pomerania, he left gifts, and he donated liturgical equipment (missals, chalices, liturgical vestments, altars, relics, bells) to the newly established churches in these areas.¹⁹

According to biographers, Otto not only provided help to those in need directly, but also indirectly, practicing asceticism in meals and clothing. Undertaking these acts out of love for one's neighbour, he allocated the goods saved in this way to help the poor and support people and institutions that directly served these people.²⁰

As a result of the analyzes carried out so far, it should be noted that on the basis of the cited facts, the moral face of Otto's holiness is clearly revealed in his extraordinary social sensitivity to the ills of the needy. As his biographers indicate, he was by no means indifferent to human shortcomings, on the contrary, he was able to notice them and deal with them appropriately. He always did so in the spirit of respecting the dignity of every person in need of help. By providing help in this way, he did not bring humiliation to anyone, but hope. From human accounts, it is known that the help offered, if it is delivered in an inappropriate way, instead of bringing relief to the person in need, brings him sadness, and even humiliation. In this context, it is necessary to recall the words of Sister Faustyna Kowalska, written in her *Diary* many centuries after Otto's life: "sometimes you give more without giving anything

¹⁷ Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 109–110.

¹⁸ Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 107.

¹⁹ Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła*, 48; Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 107; Stanisław Rosik, *Conversio gentis Pomeranorum. Studium świadectwa w wydarzeniu (XII wiek)* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Chronicon, 2010), 235–236.

²⁰ Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła*, 49.

than by giving a lot, but in a rough way"²¹. St. Faustina confirmed what Otto practiced in direct relations with people, so as not to discredit them.

The moral face of holiness was also expressed by Otto out of concern for building fraternal relations among people. At the root of this concern on his part was his humanism, which was marked by virtues: fidelity, diligence, meekness, kindness, patience, prudence, goodness, purity of morals and modesty. Having acquired such virtues, Otto gave others a testimony of his humanity, and at the same time became an incentive for them to act sacrificially to create fraternal relations between people and build a civic society. In this matter, a valuable testimony about Otto was left by a monk from Prüfening, who confessed: "Good for everyone, better for his people, the best for himself, he also cared about the progress of others and received from them a reward worthy of his effort. Finally, he left his homeland and went to Poland. He stayed there for some time and not only got to know the customs of this people, but also learned the language so thoroughly that if anyone heard him speaking a barbaric language, he would not have thought that he was dealing with a German (...).

So prudent and faithful, he wanted to pay his fellow servants out of the talent he had received. So he devoted himself to the education of the boys, and thus gained the support of mortal life in a foreign land. And this service he performed as a diligent worker, also taking care that the boys he educated would get rid of boyish frivolity"²². From the testimony of this monk, there is an unequivocal conclusion that Otto, thanks to his attitude filled with virtues, effectively influenced the creation of personal relationships between people. Thanks to this, he gave his attitude of holiness a subjective character, the fullness of which is contained in the statement: "to be with people and for people".

Summing up this part of the reflection, it should be said that Otto turned out to be a person sensitive to his fellow men. To those experiencing poverty, he knew how to provide material help, to those who were saddened and spiritually poor, he was able to direct words of comfort and hope, to those entrenched in himself, he knew how to show the value of brotherly relations and mutual support in times of need. Thus, he turned out to be a merciful servant of the needy and open to human relations, whose conduct included the principles of faithfulness to Christ's message of the Gospel, and at the same time the possibility of dialogue with other people, even of a different denomination.

²¹ Faustyna Kowalska, *Diary* (Kraków–Stockbridge–Rzym: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1981), no 1282.

²² Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła*, 46.

2.3. Fidelity to the entrusted mission

The last dimension of the moral face of Otto's holiness is his faithful service in the evangelization mission entrusted to him by his superiors. From an early age, Otto showed a desire to faithfully serve God and bring crowds of people to Him. When he became a priest, he strongly emphasized the value of monastic life and became a zealous advocate of monastic discipline. The motive for his attitude in this regard was the religious's desire to deepen their relationship with Christ and to live his Gospel. For this purpose, he willingly took up the service of the monks of the Bamberg monastery²³.

Being already the bishop of Bamberg, Otto served the cause of God with no less commitment, caring for the spiritual development of people. His spiritual concern was described by biographers as *cura animarum*. He already led it in Germany, where he devotedly served the cause of religious renewal of the faithful by preaching the word of God and sacramental ministry. The culmination of his concern for this renewal was when he undertook an evangelizing mission in Pomerania. His first missionary expedition took place in the years 1124–1125 and was undertaken by him at the invitation of the Polish prince Bolesław III Wrymouth, with whom he had personal relations. Responding positively to this invitation, he proved that the basis for his mission was not to gain personal glory or to please the ruler, but only the desire to build the kingdom of Christ on earth and lead people to salvation²⁴. Although he undertook this mission at the invitation of the prince, in practice he carried it out in an evangelical spirit, preaching to people the truth about God's mercy shown in the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary and sacramentally present in the Eucharist, convincing them to trust Him.

Otto made his second missionary expedition in 1128. Although formally he undertook it at the invitation of the Pomeranian Duke Wartislaw I, in practice he was guided by his love for the new Church. Some biographers believe that there was another reason for his undertaking this mission, namely the apostasy of the inhabitants of Wolin and Szczecin. Whatever was the reason for this mission, it shows that Otto was guided by love for God and the will to show people this God's love in which they can experience happiness²⁵. With this motive, he showed that he was motivated only by the desire to lead people to God. Thus, he turned out to be a preacher of the Truth of Christ and a credible witness to it.

²³ Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła*, 49–50; Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 111–112.

²⁴ Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 113.

²⁵ Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła*, 51.

In the evangelization mission among the Pomeranians, Otto used the method of preaching and catechizing, emphasizing God's love for people and the salvific value of their belonging to Christ and the Church. In his missionary activity, he did not use force or arms, but he engaged in dialogue with the inhabitants of Pomerania. When dialogue failed, he tried another form of persuasion. He offered to buy back Caesar's spear to the Wolinians, who had not accepted his teachings earlier, offering fifty talents of silver for it. When they did not accept his offer, then in a tone of irony he began to make them aware of what they are looking for their security in. Otto's offer to buy a spear points to two issues. On the one hand, it shows the great attachment of the Wolinians to wealth, and on the other, it shows Otto's skills as a negotiator, who was guided by concern for the salvation of people²⁶. It must also be admitted that in his teaching, Otto did not hesitate to admonish the incorrigible, referring to God's action in this regard, as exemplified by events such as the death of a woman working on Sunday in Kamień Pomorski or the burning of crops working on St. Lawrence and the death of a farmer working on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or the punishment of a priest and a multitude of pagans intending to take his life²⁷.

Otto's missionary method based on teaching and catechism in situations of resistance from some communities of towns and villages in Pomerania was sometimes reinforced by him by referring to secular power. He threatened the Wolinians who resisted his mission with the intervention of the Polish ruler. He acted in a similar style towards the inhabitants of Wologoszcz, but ultimately Prince Wartislaw I did not decide to use his power against them. In turn, towards the inhabitants of Szczecin, who were initially resistant to his missionary activities, he asked for the intervention of Bolesław III Wrymouth²⁸.

Otto was deeply convinced that the fruitfulness of his mission would depend on the application of two measures. On the one hand, pagan temples and idols had to be removed to prevent their return to worship, and on the other, the structures of the Christian religion had to be strengthened in these places. Therefore, during the missions, people erected makeshift temples, and Otto provided them with liturgical equipment so that the priests staying there could celebrate the liturgy and thus strengthen the faithful in their conversion. These, in turn, being established in the faith, were later able to resist the pagans. This method was successful. In fact, converted and established in the faith, the faithful removed pagan idols and destroyed their temples. In this matter, Otto behaved very reasonably and mercifully at the same time.

²⁶ Rosik, *Conversio gentis Pomeranorum. Studium świadectwa w wydarzeniu (XII wiek)*, 245–246.

²⁷ Wejman, *Biskup Otton z Bambergu w przestrzeni pomorskiego Kościoła*, 51–52.

²⁸ Liman, *Dialog Herborda. Ze studiów historycznoliterackich nad biografią łacińską XII wieku*, 114.

He expressed this attitude by ordering the sacrifices and loot from pagan temples to be given to the poor inhabitants, and he ordered cult statues, such as a horse in Szczecin, to be sold and the value of its sale to be allocated to the poor, and he ordered to send the statue of Trzygław to Pope Callixtus II .

The facts quoted above unequivocally prove that Otto prudently conducted an evangelizing mission in Pomerania, including its inhabitants in a relationship of love with Christ and making them members of His Church. Thanks to this attitude, he showed the moral face of his personal holiness, which was revealed in his fidelity to the mission of evangelization.

The analyzes of this part of the submission lead to the basic conclusion that moral holiness, which has its source in God's endowment, in fact consists in the love of God and neighbour. Due to the fact that love is at the foundation, holiness is one, and at the same time it can take different forms of expression depending on the tasks of its subject. In Otto's life, it was expressed in his conscientious service to Christ in the Church, in his generous service to his fellow men and in his fidelity to the mission entrusted to him. Recognizing the unity and at the same time the diversity of the sacred, Otto became, for his time, a precursor of the theological and personal approach to this matter. It can be said that, to some extent, a reflection of his position on the attitude of holiness, although not in a direct connotation, but indirectly, can be a very significant and extremely accurate statement of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, which they included in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: "In various kinds of life all who are guided by the Spirit of God practice one holiness in their duties and duties, and, obedient to the voice of the Father and worshiping God the Father in spirit and truth, they follow Christ, poor, humble and carrying the cross, in order to deserve to participate in His glory. Each one, according to his own gifts and duties, must walk without hesitation in the way of a living faith that inspires hope and works through charity"²⁹.

3. Otto's attitude of holiness as a stimulus for the activity of the present generation of people

The attitude of holiness of Otto of Bamberg, expressed in three forms that were presented in the second part of the submission, i.e. full dedication to serving Christ in the Church, sacrificial attitude towards neighbours and faithfulness to the mission entrusted, is an impulse

²⁹ CCL 41.

for the modern generation of people to act within the ecclesial community, national and international.

The first of these levels is the need for them to recognize Christ as Lord and be guided by His Gospel, so that they can contribute to building the unity of the Church and the effectiveness of its service among people. Another plane of activity of contemporary people in the spirit of Otto's attitude of holiness is the need to show mutual brotherly love, which will take the form of a testimony about Christ. And finally, the last plane of activity of people today in the spirit of this bishop and missionary is the need to be open to each other, regardless of their religion, worldview or social position. Only in dialogue will it be possible to build prosperity and peace between nations. Revealing these three planes of people's activity in the current reality will show the value and, at the same time, the current impact of Otto of Bamberg's attitude of holiness on contemporary people and societies.

3.1. Recognition of Christ is the basis for the fruitfulness of the Church's ministry

Observation of contemporary reality leads to the conclusion that today many people experience an imbalance of internal balance, the most frequent result of which is the desacralization of human life and a utilitarian approach to the world of values. The most extreme manifestation of disturbing this balance is the reification of the human person. Its essence was aptly defined by the Italian philosopher Agostino del Noce, who in his paper, which is a commentary to the encyclical of John Paul II *Redemptor hominis*, wrote that nowadays the human person is no longer treated as a "use value", but as an "exchange value". A man is perceived by some as one of the "goods" in the marketplace, which can be exchanged for another.³⁰

There are many reasons for such attitudes of some people, but the main one is their departure from God. Always the negation of God and His love expressed in the act of creating man in His image and likeness and redemption by Christ cannot but lead to the falsification of the truth about man himself. Without God, he is unable to understand himself or the purpose of his life, and thus he is unable to fulfill himself in his humanity. Therefore, if the contemporary man wants to give meaning to his existence and ultimately fulfill himself in humanity, and at the same time achieve peace of heart, he must turn to God. This regularity was aptly captured and expressed by St. Augustine, who lived at the turn of the 3rd and 4th

³⁰ Agostino del Noce, „Filosofia dell'esistenza”, in: *Il Redemptore dell'uomo. Testo e commenti* (Roma: Wydawnictwo Agora, 1979), 30.

century AD, wrote in his *Confessions*: "You have made us for yourself [God – H.W.] and our heart is restless until it rests in you"³¹. From his words it follows that when a man recognizes his relationship with the Creator, he thus gains a chance for the proper realization of his freedom and ultimate fulfillment in humanity. The presented course of reflection leads to an important conclusion that God is not a threat to man, but on the contrary, the source of his development in humanity and the achievement of peace, both in the individual and ecclesial dimension.

The most appropriate way for the rebirth of a spiritual man as a person and of the Church as a community is their entrusting themselves to Christ and recognizing His Gospel as a signpost in life. And in this regard, the timeliness of Otto of Bamberg's attitude of holiness is revealed. He who in his life, as shown above in the reflection, faithfully followed Christ and was guided by His indications. His attitude shows that the spiritual and moral renewal of people and the building of unity in the Church can only be achieved by recognizing Christ as Lord and implementing the words of His Gospel in everyday life. Thus, Otto became the precursor of the message, which, after almost seven centuries, was accurately captured and precisely expressed in her Diary by a great Polish woman and faithful disciple of Christ – Sister Faustyna Kowalska, today a saint, in the words: "Humanity will not find peace until it turns with trust in the Divine Mercy"³², and later, years later, he confirmed her words and at the same time made them more specific in his content by Pope John Paul II, when he said: "The road to the renewal of society and the Church leads through the renewal of the human heart"³³. The message of Otto of Bamberg's attitude of holiness for contemporary people is very specific in the aspect that only by being faithful to the evangelical values fully revealed by Jesus Christ can man and the Church be spiritually renewed, and in the community dimension can they maintain unity and ensure the fruitfulness of their use in the world.

3.2. Brotherly love is a sign of testimony about Christ

Just as the holiness of Christians is a sign of the action of the grace of salvation in the Church, so their mutual openness to each other is an expression of love and an example for the world. Christ included this regularity in the words of prayer: "so that the world may believe that you

³¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1972), 1.

³² Diary, nr 300.

³³ Jan Bolewski, "Program odnowy – niepodległość", *Więź* 5 (1999): 135.

have sent me" (John 17:21). In this regard, Otto of Bamberg is an example for contemporary people and at the same time shows that his attitude of holiness has not lost its relevance.

Always deep union with Christ the Priest and boundless devotion to His mission cannot fail to translate into faithful service to Him present in our neighbours. Christ has united himself to each man as closely as the head to the body. Hence, every injury to the body is painfully experienced by the head, and every benefit done to the hand or leg is a benefit to the head. Through every merciful act shown to a neighbour in the form of, for example, giving a slice of bread, a cup of water, saying a kind word or a kind smile, a person is connected not only with others in a mutual chain of love, but also with Christ, who, by virtue of the mystery of incarnation, has identified himself with every human being. Every deed done by a man to another man not only connects people with each other, but also constitutes a testimony of Christ's love. That is why Otto of Bamberg believed that when a priest or any other person would look at his ministry through the eyes of Christ, only then would he be able to testify fully to His love for the human race, but at the same time he would be able to open up to the truth about His presence in every the human person (cf. Mt 25:31-46). Thanks to this attitude, he will be able to grow in an attitude of personal dedication to Christ and at the same time he will be able to testify to His boundless love for all people.

It is the example of this attitude that Otto of Bamberg leaves to each of us. It was him who, through his attitude of providing support to those in need, regardless of their denomination, religion, worldview or social position, showed that only in effectively addressing the needs of the poor can we fulfill ourselves in humanity and experience happiness. From this it follows that every person must constantly and ever more deeply realize the truth about God who became man and accept the consequences that follow. The deeper the bond this man establishes with Christ, the more he will be able to see His presence in people and will be ready to support them in need in such a way as if he showed it to Him himself. But on the other hand, the awareness of man's bond with Christ will make him understand that every closure to the needs of another man, every blow aimed at him will hurt Him. Anyway, this principle was pointed out by Christ Himself in interpersonal relations in the words: "Whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers, you did for me (...). Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me" (cf. Mt 25:40,45).

The analyzes carried out lead to the basic conclusion that when people take care to be mutually allies of God's causes, then they will be witnesses to the world of the greatness of the Gospel message. As a consequence, they will contribute to the deepening of personal

relationships in any community and indirectly become the culprits of Christ's peace in the world, which was confirmed by Otto of Bamberg with his life and actions. And in this regard, He remains an extremely eloquent and influential figure on modern generations of people.

3.3. Fidelity to the mission as the basis for building peace in the world

Otto of Bamberg's attitude of holiness is also a call to action for today's people to bring peace between communities and nations. With his style of being towards various secular communities and authorities and nations, Otto gives an example of how to give the mutual relations between religious and secular authorities, and between nations, a creative and peaceful character.

The fruitfulness of meetings depends on the quality of dialogue between their subjects. The first condition that these subjects should take, and what Otto showed in his life, is fidelity to the truth. Only in fidelity to the truth, which is Jesus Christ, who directly defines himself as the Truth (cf. Jn 14:6), which Otto of Bamberg served with such dedication, will an individual be able to discover the value of his freedom and the way of its implementation, and individual groups religions and peoples will be able to present one another and at the same time take courses of action through which they can be more themselves and thus become sowers of peace.

It was thanks to his trust in Christ and fidelity to the mission that Otto was able to preach the Gospel of Christ to people and convince them to take up it, and when necessary, he was able to involve secular authorities in this cause. As a result of such actions, many thousands of people were converted and accepted Christ into their lives. In the present reality, there is a need for both priests and believers who, through faithful adherence to the teachings of Christ, will bear witness to Him and thus contribute to the introduction of peace in society and between nations.

And at this point, the second condition for the creative activity of subjects is revealed. It is respecting the human dignity of the interlocutor and looking for areas of mutual being together. Otto of Bamberg in his evangelizing activity was guided in every respect by respect for his interlocutor, and in persuading his ideas he used dialogue, never intimidation or violence. Thus, for contemporary people, it is a model of approach to another person who has different beliefs and at the same time indicates the way of looking for mutual understanding between them and acting for the common good. In the present reality, the problems that require people to be together and act together in social and religious life are: drug addiction,

alcoholism, protection of the life of the unborn, euthanasia, unemployment, the holiness of marriage and the family, social justice, principles of peace and tolerance. For these matters, every person, regardless of their faith or worldview, and their social position, should make a personal effort and act selflessly to eliminate these phenomena in every way, starting from informing about the dangerous effects of their use, through taking preventive actions, protection against these phenomena, to educational activities, and ending with legal solutions.

How different the religious map of the world would look today if the followers of different denominations over the centuries did not waste their strength on internal disputes, but used them to discover the truth of God and look for ways to be with each other. Otto of Bamberg points to this way of building ecumenical relations. If they are taken up by representatives of various denominations and guided by them in mutual relations, they will have an impact on the creation of unity between people and the introduction of peace in communities and in the world.

From the reflections carried out, it can be concluded that the topicality of the message of Otto of Bamberg's attitude of holiness results from what constitutes the essence of his spiritual life, namely: from boundless dedication to the service of Christ in His Church, sacrificial service to others and faithful fulfillment of the mission entrusted to him. It is in these spaces of human spirituality that Otto of Bamberg remains for contemporary people a model of spiritual renewal through faithfulness to evangelical values, bearing witness to Christ by practicing brotherly love and introducing peace between communities and nations by faithfully fulfilling state tasks and respecting religious beliefs.

Conclusion

Summing up the whole reflection, it should be stated that holiness, in the view of Otto of Bamberg, is a given gift. It is created by the grace of God's call to holiness and the response to this grace – a gift through the recognition of this endowment on the part of man.

The awareness of God's endowment on the part of man cannot but induce him to act morally, i.e. the so-called moral holiness, i.e. taking actions towards God, neighbours and mission. This dimension of holiness in Otto's life took the form of his boundless service to Christ in the Church, then his sensitivity to the needs of his neighbours and sacrificial service towards them, and finally in his zealous fulfillment of the evangelizing mission entrusted to him. In this context, it should be said that holiness, according to Otto of Bamberg, is a value not for some, but for every human being, and is not a single style of being, but an

extraordinary wealth of forms that have their source in God. What connects all these forms and at the same time constitutes the essential content of holiness is sanctifying grace and the inseparable love of God given by Christ in the Holy Spirit, calling man to respond to it in a similar spirit.

The attitude of holiness of Otto of Bamberg, expressed in his dedication to the service of Christ in the Church, in sacrificial service to his neighbours and in faithful fulfillment of the mission entrusted to him, became in these forms of expression a model for contemporary people. Its exemplary character is revealed in showing the source of spiritual renewal through faithfulness to evangelical values, in bearing witness to Christ by practicing brotherly love and in introducing peace between communities and nations by faithfully fulfilling state tasks and respecting religious beliefs. In a word, the more intensely man grows in Christ's love, that is, in holiness, the more effectively he will contribute to building a more humane world in which the human person will be the subject and goal of all structures, from economic, through social and political, to on cultural and religious.

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