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PROCESSIONS IN CHRISTIAN LITURGY:
ORIGIN, THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY*

Abstract. The author undertakes the theme of Christian processions: their origin, theological aspects and significant questions of pastoral ministry. He presents the psychological and sociological, historical and religious as well as anthropological and cultural roots of processions revealing their “horizontal” mechanism of creation and “vertical” dimension, i.e. the reference to sacramentum. He demonstrates the Biblical foundation of Christian processions: the Old Testament processions and one procession described in the New Testament, namely the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. In addition, he introduces the historical evolution of the procession phenomena in the Church and proposes a theological definition of a Christian procession. The article concludes with several suggestions concerning liturgical ministry.

Key words: procession; liturgy; liturgical ministry.

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INTRODUCTION

Although the phenomenon of processions is very characteristic of Christian liturgy and folk religiosity it is not only part of Christianity. It constitutes a vital element of cult encountered in all known religions and it has been somehow “taken over” by Christianity as an outer type of religiosity. Moreover, in the secular sphere of human life there are various forms of social behaviour such as marches, retinues and parades which are analogical to religious processions or popular “white marches” and “silent marches” organised as an expression of disapproval of certain actions or behaviour and in support of some person or idea. They are not described as processions since this term is reserved for religious events.¹

Similarly, the term used in the religious sense only is a “pilgrimage” to distinguish it from a “retinue,” “march” and “parade” which belong to a political, social and cultural sphere of our life. It must be remembered that a “pilgrimage” has a broader meaning than “procession.” The latter might constitute a ritualised part of a pilgrimage and some stages of a pilgrimage, for example the initial and final part of it, can become processions.² A pilgrimage is a journey to a shrine or other location of importance for believers. In a pilgrimage the moment of reaching the destination is more crucial than in a procession as a pilgrimage signifies “leaving something” and “reaching something.”³ A pilgrimage might be experienced in silence. This is not possible in the case of procession which has always a communal character. A procession is a solemn march in the direction of some place, for example an altar, but it does not exclude a return to the initial place, for example a procession around the church or inside the church starting and finishing in the chancel. Processions, in contrast to pilgrimages, are generally a “place and moment of celebration” and their essence is the “celebration itself.”

¹ Cf. Irénée-Henri DALMAIS, “Note sur la sociologie des processions,” *La Maison-Dieu* 43 (1955): 37–42.

² See Stefano ROSSO, “Processione,” in *Nuovo Dizionario di Liturgia*, ed. Domenico Sartore and Achille M. Triacca (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo Edizioni, 1990), 1111–12.

³ See Aldo Natale TERRIN, “La processione come archetipo antropologico. Riflessioni fenomenologiche e storico-religiose,” *Rivista Liturgica* 79 (1992): 454.

1. HORIZONTAL DIMENSION OF PROCESSION

In order to understand the origin and theological significance of Christian processions it is necessary to refer to their psycho-sociological, historical-religious and anthropological-cultural roots. Such a reference allows us to distinguish a horizontal dimension of each procession (a “mechanism” of its creation in a natural sphere, namely without taking into consideration religious motivations of man) and also a vertical dimension of processions (a reference to transcendence and *sacrum*), which is intrinsically linked with the horizontal dimension. It must be emphasised that the vertical dimension of processions decides about the essential difference between procession in Judaism and Christianity, on the one hand, and all other processions, on the other hand.

The mechanism of the formation of processions on a personal and interpersonal level, without taking into consideration religious motivations, which *nota bene* should always accompany the participants if the identity of procession is not to be lost, is identical or similar to the mechanism of the formation of marches and parades even if they do not bear any characteristic of a cult.⁴ The incentive to organise a procession or any type of march is a desire to be together, to demonstrate in movement and through movement some ideas, convictions and experiences which are shared by all the participants of the event. In this sense, it is possible to speak of the horizontal dimension of each march or parade but also pilgrimage and procession.

From the point of view of psychology what distinguishes a march or parade, which have no religious references, from a procession, which has a clear religious significance, is intentionality. Values, aspirations and ideals which constitute intentionality are transformed into motivations to act. They, in turn, give rise to concrete attitudes and behaviour. The psychological need for rituals (the need for a rite/ritual),⁵ constituting one of the fundamental features of human psyche in every epoch and culture, is seen as a direct cause and source of organising both non-religious marches and religious processions.⁶

⁴ It is necessary to be aware of the fact that a human being (*homo religiosus*) does not function without any references to *trans-* (across, beyond, on the other side of) or some absolute in a psychological sphere. Even an atheist is a religious person who solves the problem of his religiosity in a negative way. Thus our limitation is justified only due to methodological reasons.

⁵ Terms “rite/ritual” are explained in Silvano MAGGIANI, “Rito/Riti,” in *Nuovo Dizionario di Liturgia*, 1223–25.

⁶ Cf. Giuseppe SOVERNIGO, “Corteo civile e corteo religioso. Aspetti psicologici,” in *Ricerche sulla religiosità popolare nella Bibbia, nella liturgia, nella pastorale* (Bologna: EDB, 1979), 248.

2. VERTICAL DIMENSION OF PROCESSION

Cultural anthropology, ethnology and history of religion demonstrate clearly that in every religion a ritual/rite refers directly to some mystery of faith or to certain elements of a belief system. It is perfectly visible in the case of ancient Greek mysteries celebrated in *boedromion* (September/October) in Eleusis, near Athens. In ancient mystery religions every myth (understood as a certain “truth”/“mystery” in a belief system) had its own separate ritual (rite). The followers of those religions believed that through an active participation in a rite they “entered” in contact with a deity which is invoked by them. Thanks to the ritual reconstruction of scenes from the time when “gods stayed on earth” the participants of the ritual commemorating this event took part in the mystery of a deity. Each ritual action and each procession was not only a repetition but the “actualisation” and “realisation” of those “miraculous” events from the life of a deity, it was a return, on the level of celebration, to the ancient times when “gods dwelt with people.”⁷

In all known ancient religions processional rites were performed in order to express gratitude to deities, enlist or propitiate them. Processional rites also constituted a “dramatisation” of gods’ actions and behaviour. The processional statues of gods were carried out of the sacred places, the “enclosures of holiness,” so that they could guard the space and territory of the procession and “sanctify” them through a physical contact. Processions were also understood as the rite which prepared for the encounter with a deity. Many processions were associated with the cycle of seasons and an annually repeated process of “rebirth” of the nature and the world. Finally, funeral

⁷ Using an analogy to mystery rituals and remembering about the fundamental essential and content-related difference between monotheism (especially Christianity) and other religions and cults it might be said that Christian liturgy is also a ritual action, entering and participation in the Paschal Mystery of Christ and its realisation through celebration. Christian liturgy is a divine act of redemption under the cover of signs and symbols. It is the continuation and actualisation of this act thanks to a constant presence of the Holy Spirit (“until the end of the world”). See Odo CASEL, *Das christliche Kultmysterium* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1932), 94–115; see also Daniel BRZEZIŃSKI, “*Chrystus wczoraj i dziś, i na wieki.*” *Anamnetyczny wymiar roku liturgicznego* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo “Bernardinum,” 2015), 160–88; Waldemar PAŁĘCKI, *Rok liturgiczny Paschy Chrystusa. Misterium roku liturgicznego według Odo Casela (1886-1948)* (Sandomierz: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne i Drukarnia w Sandomierzu, 2006), 43–101; Andrea BOZZOLO, *Mistero, simbolo e rito in Odo Casel. L’effettività sacramentale della fede* (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003); Mircea ELIADE, *Mito e realtà* (Roma: Borla, 1985), 23–42; Battista MONDIN, *Mito e religioni. Introduzione alla mitologia religiosa e alle nuove religioni* (Milano: Massimo, 1997), 7–23.

processions had a great cultural and cultic significance as an expression of cult of deceased ancestors.⁸

In comparison to other ancient rites processions might be defined as prayers supported and expressed by a rhythmical movement combined with singing and sometimes music and dance, namely with a specific animation and choreography. Such a movement which is a dominant factor of procession, from a phenomenological and sociological point of view, appears to be one of the most effective forms of expression in a community.⁹ Religiology also emphasises a particular solidarity of the participants of the procession and their cohesion. Collective proceeding with prayer and singing united and somehow stimulated *participatio visiva*.¹⁰ The aim of movement in the procession was not so much about reaching the destination but experiencing the way together and manifesting and ritualising shared ideas and convictions.

Each procession had an established order and its exceptional character, splendour, dignity and sacrality were emphasised by the objects of cult which were carried and by a special outfit of participants.

3. PROCESSIONS IN HOLY SCRIPTURE

Ancient pagan processions retaining the elements mentioned above acquire a special significance and meaning in Judaism and Christianity: they are the place of encounter between God and man. Jewish processions are closer to Christian due to their common biblical foundation rooted in the Old Testament and the experience of the only one God. Both the processions of the Old Testament and ancient mystery processions became, in a sense, a theological and liturgical paradigm of Christian processions although none of the Old Testament processions is part of Christian liturgy.¹¹

⁸ This theme is undertaken by Mircea ELIADE, *Il sacro e il profano* (Torino: Boringhieri, 1968); *Trattato di storia delle religioni* (Torino: Boringhieri, 1972), specially 383–84; Aldo Natale TERRIN, “Il rito della processione. Appunti per una interpretazione religiosa storico-comparata,” in *Ricerche sulla religiosità popolare*, 229–35; Gererdus VAN DER LEEUV, *Fenomenologia della religione* (Torino: Boringhieri, 1960), especially 296–7; *Enciclopedia Italiana*, vol. 28, 273–4; *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. 10, col. 74; *Dizionario di antichità classiche di Oxford* (Italian edition), 1559. 1732–33. 2040.

⁹ Cf. A.N. TERRIN, “Il rito della processione,” 226–7; “La processione come archetipo,” 445.

¹⁰ Herman A. J. WEGMAN, “‘Procedere’ und Prozeession. Eine Typologie,” *Liturgisches Jahrbuch* 27 (1977): 33.

¹¹ In this paper the focus is on the processions in the Old Testament without taking into consideration other types of *deambulatio religiosa*, such as pilgrimages and religious marches. Cf.

In the Old Testament there are numerous descriptions of processions: a procession organized by Joshua before conquering Jericho (Jos 6:1–16); a processional moving of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem by David (2 Sam 6:1–23; 1 Chron 15:1–16,3); moving the Ark of the Covenant from Zion, the City of David, to the Temple built by Salomon (1 Kgs 8:1–9; 2 Chron 5:2–10); a procession consisting of two thanksgiving choirs, or to be more precise two parallel processions, associated with the consecration of the wall of Jerusalem in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ne 12:27–43); a thanksgiving procession organised by Judith after the victory over Holofernes, which is an indirect testimony of processions in the Temple of Jerusalem (Jdt 15:12–16,18). Moreover, apart from these extraordinary processions which took place only once in psalms there are examples of processions which took place in the Holy Temple regularly and undoubtedly constituted part of liturgy (Ps. 24/23/, Ps. 68/67/, Ps. 84/83/, Ps. 95/94/, Ps. 114/113/, Ps. 120/119/–135/134/). Also, the journey of the Israelites through the desert towards the Promised Land and their return from Babylonian captivity are sometimes compared to the great processions led by Yahweh.¹²

In the New Testament the only procession is the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem which constitutes a ritual end of his pilgrimage to the Temple of Jerusalem and at the same time the beginning of his Sacrifice on the Cross.¹³ As a salvific event directly inscribed in the Paschal Mystery of Christ it has been commemorated annually in liturgy in the Church in Jerusalem since the 4th century, which is testified by the pilgrim named Egeria (Etheria)¹⁴, and later in other local Christian Churches of the East and West. This event is described by all Evangelists (Mt 21:1–17; Mk 11:1–10; Lk 19:28–48; Jn 12:12–19). In the Synoptic Gospels it consists of two consecutive scenes, namely the description of the Messianic procession towards Jerusa-

Renato DE ZAN, “Processioni popolari nell’Antico Testamento,” in *Ricerche sulla religiosità popolare*, 171–81.

¹² See S. ROSSO, “Processione,” 1112–13; Spirito RINAUDO, *I salmi preghiera di Cristo e della Chiesa* (Leumann [To]: Elle Di Ci, 1993).

¹³ François Louvel believes that bringing Jesus into the temple in Jerusalem by Mary and Joseph on the Feast of the Presentation could be regarded as a procession which is inscribed in the cycle of Christ’s pilgrimages to Jerusalem. However, it was performed in silence without the presence of people and although instead of the Ark God himself was carried to the temple it seems that the Presentation does not bear any significant features of procession. See François LOUVEL, “Les processions dans la Bible,” *La Maison-Dieu* 43 (1955): 24.

¹⁴ EGERIA, *Itinerarium* 31. EGERIE, *Journal de voyage* (Itinéraire), ed. Pierre Maraval, SC 296 (Paris: Cerf, 1982), 273–5. See John F. BALDOVIN, *Liturgy in Ancient Jerusalem* (Nottingham: Grove Books Ltd, 1989), 61.

lem and the Holy Temple and the account of chasing the traders out of the Temple by Jesus. Only St John, probably due to a different “theological key,” places this scene in a different context (Jn 2:13–19), namely after the miracle at the Wedding at Cana so that both events confirm the Divine and Messianic dignity of the Lord.

Biblical scholars maintain that the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is inscribed in his last journey to the city: a traditional pilgrimage to the annual Feast of Passover.¹⁵ The procession of Jesus to the temple which ended with chasing away the defilers from the temple and later with the Passion and death of Christ leads towards the spiritual Temple of the Body (the Church) of the Resurrected Lord. In the Book of Revelation written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple there is a description of the heavenly Jerusalem without the shrine and procession as the earthly pilgrimage is over (Rev 7:9-17).

The People of the Old Testament led by Yahweh were progressing towards the Promised Land, the Holy City of Jerusalem and the temple but the salvation could happen in the New Testament with Christ and in crucified and resurrected Christ. In this way, every procession as a ritualisation of the earthly pilgrimage of man will be fulfilled in the eschatological times and is the expression of Christian hope. Biblical processions usually ended with the sacrifice. In the New Testament Christ is the Priest who offers the Sacrifice and He is the Sacrifice himself. Church processions will be shaped and understood according to the presented biblical vision but it cannot be said that they originate directly from the Bible. They are enriched by the elements of widely understood culture, such as geographical situation and historical time in which certain liturgical and folk forms of processions are formed.¹⁶

4. FROM THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN PROCESSIONS

Due to the lack of liturgical books and other relevant sources it is not possible to reconstruct precisely processional practices in the first three

¹⁵ Some exegetes believe that it is not the pilgrimage before the Feast of Passover but before the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*, celebrated at the turn of September and October) or the Feast of Dedication (*Hanukkah*, celebrated at the turn of November and December). See Giovanni LEONARDI, “Il corteo popolare organizzato da Gesù durante un pellegrinaggio al tempio,” in *Ricerche sulla religiosità popolare*, 198–9.

¹⁶ See Renato DE ZAN, “Le processioni: modelli biblici. Le deambulazioni sacre nella Bibbia,” *Rivista Liturgica* 79 (1992): 478.

centuries of the Church. For a historian of liturgy it would be especially interesting to recreate the process of transformation from pagan and synagogue processions to processional forms known in the later epoch after the Edict of Milan (313) which granted religious freedom. The majority of processions of that time bear the characteristic of the court ceremonial applied in liturgy since the reign of Emperor Constantine. Many were distinguished by splendour typical of pagan processions which was caused by the fact that many new Christians used to be pagans. Some processions were just “born,” for example the entrance procession at the beginning of the Holy Mass. Before, as we know, the Eucharist was celebrated in private houses (*domus ecclesiae*) where a long solemn ingress of a celebrant and servers was not needed or possible due to the “privacy” of the gathering. Since the fourth century there has been a dynamic development of Christian sacral architecture. Churches built in Rome were influenced by the architecture of Greco-Roman basilicas which were public buildings created for secular purposes by the emperor. A long nave, rhythmic colonnade and mosaic floor of basilicas facilitated the ingress of a celebrant and his assistants in a procession in the direction of apse and triumphal arch.¹⁷ Other processions of the Holy Mass followed the same course.

The early Christian processions had undoubtedly a highly commemorative character recalling the salvific events of the life of Jesus, such as the Palm Sunday procession described in the diary of Etheria. However, a pastoral necessity to replace the existing pagan processions with Christian, in terms of content and ritual, led to the introduction to the Church liturgy the processions with folk elements and the disappearance of biblical and Christological references. In the Western Church the development of such processions reached its apogee in the late Middle Ages where liturgy was dominated by folk processions of a devotional and votive character. In the Middle Ages folk religiosity was mainly marked by processions of a “hagiographic” character to worship the Blessed Virgin Mary and patron saints.¹⁸ The Middle Ages are a period of theological discussion on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In the context of these debates the cult of the Blessed Sacrament is born which is reflected in Eucharistic processions also known as theophoric. From the Council of Trent until the Second Vatican Council, in

¹⁷ See Jordi PINELL, “La processione come componente dell’azione liturgica,” in *Ricerche sulla religiosità popolare*, 155–6.

¹⁸ See more Réginald GRÉGOIRE, “Modelli processionali medievali rinascimentali,” *Rivista Liturgica* 79 (1992): 505–13.

the so-called “age of rubricists,” the attention was focused mostly on the ceremonial and legal aspects (in accordance with the understanding of liturgy and the practise of liturgics) and the “negligence” of the theological and symbolical significance of processions.¹⁹ However, the law in liturgy, although very important and necessary to preserve the beauty, dignity and order is primarily the consequence of the theological sense and later the result of the historical development of divine service in the Church and ministry.

5. AN ATTEMPT OF DEFINITION OF CHRISTIAN PROCESSIONS

According to Aimé-Georges Martimort, a procession, namely *deambulatio religiosa*, known in many cultures and religions can be described as Christian when it fulfils certain conditions²⁰: a) a local congregation gathering in a certain place with the clergy of the Church; b) proceeding according to an established order²¹; c) establishing a place of worship as the aim of the procession; d) prayer (supplication or thanksgiving, frequently combined with singing) which makes a procession a liturgical life experienced with

¹⁹ It is worth studying the definitions of processions in the old textbooks or dictionaries. For example, *Catholic Encyclopaedia* from 1953, published in Italy, defined a procession as “il procedere cerimonialmente, in pubblico, a passi misurati, di un gruppo che precede o segue un simulacro o un personaggio illustre” (specifying that in the Catholic liturgy “la processione è una supplica solenne fatta in onore e lode di Dio e dei santi, in ringraziamento, in penitenza e in espiazione, specialmente in tempi di calamità. È un atto tanto di omaggio verso Dio, quanto di esaltazione del sentimento religioso”). It devoted much attention to the Church discipline and norms included in the Code of Canon Law from 1917; see *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, vol. 10, 72–4. Moreover, the current *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* when defining a procession quotes certain terms from the post-Trent *Rituale Romanum*: “Publicae sacraeque processiones, seu sollemnes supplicatione, quae a populo fidei duce dero fiunt eundo ordinatim praesertim de loco sacro ad locum sacrum cum precibus et cantibus, ex antiquo Sanctorum Patrum instituto catholica Ecclesia usurpare consuevit vel ad excitandam fidelium pietatem vel ad commemoranda Dei beneficia eique gratias agendas vel ad divinum auxilium implorandum, qua par est religione celebrari debent; continent enim magna et divina mysteria, et salutare christianae pietatis fructus eas pie exsequentes a Deo consequuntur, de quibus fideles praemonere et erudire pastorum animarum est”; *Caeremoniale Episcoporum ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatum*, Editio typica. Reimpressio ([Romae:] Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1985), no. 1093, 252. However, it must be stressed that in *Caeremoniale* the excessive rubricism concerning processional forms has been overcome.

²⁰ Cf. Aimé-Georges MARTIMORT, “Les diverses formes de procession dans la liturgie,” *La Maison-Dieu* 43 (1955): 46.

²¹ Jean Evenou adds “following the cross”; see Jean EVENOU, “Processioni, pellegrinaggi, religione popolare,” in *La Chiesa in preghiera. Introduzione alla liturgia*, vol. 3: *I sacramenti*, ed. Robert Cabié, Jean Evenou, Pierre M. Gy et al. (Brescia: Queriniana, 1987), 268.

intensity; e) commemorating and conducting a Christian mystery (a procession becomes an exceptional place of celebrating the history of salvation). These factors constitute a Christian procession defined as a ritualisation of eschatological aspiration of man in a liturgical gathering which celebrates in motion (a symbolical vision of time and space) the mystery of our faith.

In other words, each Christian procession is a sign or even a symbol (where the signifying reality includes the signified reality) of earthly pilgrimage of the Church and the world towards eschatological times in the heavenly liturgy. Just as Israel in the Old Testament progressed towards freedom and salvation, the Church is constantly on the way. Various types of processions express this reality. An organised ecclesial community starts from some point, leaving the situation and lifestyle, converts and progresses together towards a certain destination, namely a shrine, church or altar always moving towards a place which symbolises Christian mystery in order to identify with the delineated reality.²²

In the current Roman liturgy processions might be divided into two groups: those associated with the celebration of sacrament, especially the Eucharist and processions related to the cycle of the liturgical year.

During the Holy Mass there are four processions: the entrance procession, the Gospel procession before the Proclamation of the Gospel,²³ the procession with gifts and the communion procession.²⁴ Some liturgists claim that the processional rite at the end of the Holy Mass when a celebrant, servers and even a congregation leave the church is also a procession.²⁵ The current Roman Missal does not treat the leaving after the Holy Mass as procession, however, the Ceremonial of Bishops does.²⁶ Although it is difficult to observe in the ending procession all the essential elements it is not a usual return to the sacristy but it has some ritual meaning.

²² Cf. José ALDAZÁBAL, *Simboli e gesti. Significato antropologico, biblico e liturgico* (Leumann [To]: Elle Di Ci, 1988), 241–2.

²³ Nowadays, the Holy Mass celebrated by a bishop may include the Gospel procession after the Proclamation of the Gospel, from a pulpit to a bishop who blesses a congregation with the Book of the Gospels.

²⁴ The Roman Missal of Pope Paul VI does not treat the blessing of a congregation with holy water during the rite of asperges on Sunday as procession stating that “sacerdos aspergit [...] pro opportunitate transuendo per ecclesiam.” *Missale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Pauli PP. VI promulgatum Ioannis Pauli PP. II cura recognitum*, Editio typica tertia ([Romae:] Typis Vaticanis 2002), 1251.

²⁵ See Felice RAINOLDI, “Tipologia delle processioni nel quadro dell’anno liturgico,” *Rivista Liturgica* 79 (1992): 541.

²⁶ Cf. *Caeremoniale Episcoporum*, 170, 51.

In the Liturgical Year, in the Latin liturgy, apart from the votive, Eucharistic, theophoric, penance, Marian processions, processions to worship saints and other local folk and liturgical forms, frequently unrelated to a given celebration or season in the church year there are processions which are observed by the entire Western Church, such as the Procession of Candles on the Purification of our Lady, the Roman “station” processions, that of Palms on Palm Sunday, the carrying of the Blessed Sacrament to the altar of repose after the Holy Mass on Maundy Thursday, processions associated with the adoration of the Holy Cross during the liturgy of Good Friday, the procession with a Paschal candle and to the font on Holy Saturday and the procession on the feast of *Corpus Christi*.

Processions included in the Eucharist and those which take part during the church year are the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Undoubtedly, all forms of cult which are part of liturgy have an anamnestic character. The question of the anamnestic dimension remains open when it comes to the processional forms which belong to the folk religiosity, for example some devotional processions which cannot be regarded as the anamnesis of salvific events. The outer signs of a symbolical or anamnestic presence of Christ during the procession are: a celebrant, a liturgical congregation (in this sense we speak of sacramentality *per analogiam*), a cross, the Book of the Gospels, a Paschal candle, lit candles and a burning incense thurible. The simplification of many processional rites after the Second Vatican Council in accordance with the postulate expressed in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*²⁷ testifies to the return to the classical “pure” Roman liturgy.

The new Roman Calendar from 1969 and the current Roman Missal do not mention old processions of local origin which involved intercession and asking forgiveness, the so-called *Rogationes* (the Rogation Days): *litaniae maiores* (April, 25th) and the Gallican *litaniae minores* which took place on the three cross days (today: days of supplication prayers) before the Feast of Ascension.

²⁷ See *Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 34, in *Enchiridion documentorum instaurationis liturgicae*, vol. 1 (1963-1973), ed. Rainer Kaczynski (Torino: Marietti, 1976), 9.

6. PASTORAL SUGGESTIONS

Without focusing on the origin, historical development, theological sense and particular pastoral questions associated with each of the processions in the Roman liturgy as this theme is not the aim of this paper my intention is to present several general postulates which refer to the phenomenon of processions.

First of all, it seems that in liturgical pastoral care we concentrate too much on the instructions, namely the rubricistic and ceremonial aspects of processions rather than on their theological and liturgical significance whereas the foundation of an informed, active and fruitful participation in liturgy is formation based on information. Processions play an important role as popular signs of cult, liturgy and Christian religiosity. The faithful participate or observe them during each Holy Mass. They take part in processions associated with celebrating various feasts at least several times a year. However, the topic of processions which may become an effective apologia and manifestation of faith is almost absent in the liturgical formation for both children and adults.²⁸

Secondly, a separate important issue is a selection of appropriate processional chants. In this respect, liturgical tradition of the Church offers a wide variety of repertoire, apart from religious songs there are litanies, acclamations, psalms, hymns, antiphons and responsories.²⁹

Moreover, the church architects frequently do not remember about processions, suggesting such a shape and interior of the church that the Gospel procession from the altar to pulpit or the procession to the font are not possible.

Finally, the faithful have to take care of the appropriate content and dignified image of processions so that they will not be perceived as some form of *theatrum* or an element of Christian tradition and culture typical of the

²⁸ The Directory for Masses with Children emphasises the educational and formative role of processions. "Among the actions that are considered under this heading, processions and other activities that involve physical participation deserve special mention. The children's entering in procession with the priest can serve to help them to experience a sense of the communion that is thus being created. The participation of at least some children in the procession with the Book of the Gospels makes clear the presence of Christ announcing the word to his people. The procession of children with the chalice and the gifts expresses more clearly the value and meaning of the preparation of the gifts. The communion procession, if properly arranged, helps greatly to develop the children's devotion." See Sacra Congregatio pro Cultu Divino, "Directorium de Missis cum pueris," no. 34, *Notitiae* 89 (1974), 1: 15.

²⁹ For more see Joseph GELINEAU, "Le chants de procession," *Rivista liturgica* 43 (1955): 74–93.

past and “Christian folklore” by those outside the Church. Even if the dangers of religious syncretism and wrongly understood inculturation and acculturation do not refer to us, we have to remember that our form of cult and folk religiosity, including a variety of popular processions, are free from deviation and deformation.

In liturgical ministry there is a need to make the faithful aware of the fact that Christian processions which are rightly understood, appropriately organised, performed and experienced bear fruit as “*continent magna et divina mysteria*.”³⁰

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³⁰ *Caeremoniale Episcoporum*, no. 1093, 252.

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PROCESJE W LITURGII CHRZEŚCIJAŃSKIEJ:
GENEZA, TEOLOGIA I DUSZPASTERSTWO

Streszczenie

Autor podejmuje problematykę procesji chrześcijańskich: ich genezy, aspektów teologicznych oraz istotnych kwestii duszpasterskich. Przedstawia korzenie psychologiczno-socjologiczne, historyczno-religijne i antropologiczno-kulturowe procesji, ukazując ich „horyzontalny” mechanizm

tworzenia i wymiar „wertikalny”, czyli odniesienie do *sacrum*. Wskazuje biblijny fundament procesji chrześcijańskich: procesje Starego Testamentu oraz jedyną procesję opisaną w Nowym Testamencie – uroczysty wjazd Chrystusa do Jerozolimy. Przypomina historyczną ewolucję fenomenu procesji w Kościele oraz proponuje teologiczną definicję procesji chrześcijańskiej. Artykuł kończy kilkoma postulatami odnoszącymi się do duszpasterstwa liturgicznego.

Słowa kluczowe: procesja; liturgia; duszpasterstwo liturgiczne.