DYING WITHOUT A PRIEST AND FAITH IN THE RESURRECTION

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Christ is risen, but we do not believe it anyway. And I say this, my dear friends, in all seriousness: we Catholics simply do not believe in the Resurrection of Christ. We, the baptized, the confirmed, and also often even those who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders, simply do not believe in the Resurrection of Christ the Lord. And I do not mean here only such prominent individuals as Cardinal Walter Kasper or other leading figures of the German Church, who openly write in their books that the Resurrection of Christ is not to be understood literally, as a historical fact, but that it is rather about the experience of the disciples, about the fact that the Lord began to live anew in the hearts of the disciples.

Today, my dear brethren, I wish to say a few words not about such heretical nonsense, but about what our attitude, we Poles, is towards the mystery of death and resurrection. And I wish, my dear brethren, to share with you today — although this night is so joyful, so blessed, that alone it has deserved to know the hour of the Lord's Resurrection — I wish to share with you a very sad, terrifying story, one that bears witness to the spiritual state of present-day Polish Catholics.

THE LAST MINISTRY

My dear brethren, perhaps some of you have come across this, have heard of it, namely that dying people are being deprived of the ministry, of the last priestly ministry. And this is not happening in Germany, it is not happening in the Netherlands, where euthanasia has already become our daily bread. It is happening here, on this Polish, Catholic soil. On the soil of Podkarpacie, for instance, famed for its conservatism and attachment to religion. And it turns out, my dear brethren, that visiting a dying person in hospital is simply impossible, because the priest might infect him with that famous virus and cause his death.

And, my dear brethren, tell me, what does a dying man need? He will not return to health. What does he need, my dear brethren, if not the last priestly ministry, the last anointing, priestly absolution? Why should people in Catholic Poland, in the year of the Lord 2021, have to die like dogs?

Dear faithful, a conversation with a nurse, who says that she understands perfectly well that this man needs a priest. "But you know, Father, if we let a priest into our hospital, then surely a whole queue of people would immediately want to make use of the priest's ministry." And this is a crime? That a sick, dying man wants to be reconciled with God before his death?

One of the faithful lay in wait, in this matter, for the Archbishop of Przemyśl, Archbishop Szal. He accosted him after one of the Holy Masses, by the sacristy, and presented the problem to him, and the archbishop declared: "Sir, what is it you want? God is merciful and will forgive everyone everything. So please let it be and do not pursue this subject."

And now another act of this dramatic story. One of the nurses, who is perhaps the only one who still believes in the Resurrection and understands that a dying man needs the last ministry in order to prepare for passing through those gates between life and death — or, to put it precisely, between life and life, because Christ the Lord has crushed death and opened for us the gate leading from life to life, so that death is not the end of our existence but the beginning of a new existence — this nurse agreed to let a priest in at midnight. And she agreed to do so in the case of several of the sick. And imagine, some wretch, some Judas, informed on her for having dared to let a priest in at night, and she was suspended from her duties and now faces disciplinary dismissal.

HOMES WITHOUT THE RISEN ONE

Dear faithful, such is the picture of Polish Catholics, who today went in crowds to the churches with their little baskets of blessed food. Perhaps in smaller crowds than in previous years, but they went there only so that the priest might sprinkle holy water on their little egg, which tomorrow they will wash down copiously with vodka, gossiping without any restraint about whomever they can, and above all about those insolent priests who dare to meddle in people's lives, who dare to speak about Jesus Christ, about some cross, some sacrifice, about conversion, about sin, and God forbid, about hell.

There is no room for the Risen One in Polish homes. That is why what I said is no exaggeration: Christ is risen, but we do not believe it. Because we have become traitors, Judases. Because we have become like a nation of God-killers. We have taken our stand in one rank with those who on Good Friday cried out before Pilate: "Crucify Him!", and who afterwards went to Pilate to ask for a guard to watch over Christ's tomb, lest He rise from the dead. And we, the Poles, have become just that. Let us not beat the breasts of others, but strike our own.

And so, my dear brethren, there is no longer faith in the Resurrection. All that is left is, as it were, an empty eggshell. The shell is still there, but inside there is emptiness. And it is an emptiness that terrifies, unlike the emptiness of Christ's tomb, which astonishes, shocks, and gives hope for new life. But in order to attain this new life, we must, my dear brethren, take to heart the words of Saint Paul the Apostle, which we heard in today's lesson: "If then you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."

So, my dear brethren, we cannot content ourselves with a religion that is Catholic-like, some chocolate-like product, which in its essence is nothing other than yet another edition of Protestantism, which, contrary to what you imagine, triumphs today in Polish Catholic minds and hearts, in which there is no room for the risen Lord.

And so a certain Bierny [?] told me recently that his close friend had decided to convert to Catholicism. His parents, several decades ago, twenty years ago, abandoned the Catholic faith and became members of a Pentecostal sect. This young man, by the grace of God, understood the error of his parents and decided to return to the bosom of the Catholic Church. My dear brethren, for several months he had to fight with parish and curial bureaucracy, bringing in one more bit of paper after another, signing one more document after another, as though someone wanted at all costs to discourage him from taking this step.

And finally, when it came to the ceremony in which he made his Catholic profession of faith, during Holy Mass, before a parish priest delegated by the Archbishop Metropolitan of Warsaw, then during that Holy Mass Holy Communion, as is the case in many Warsaw churches, was given only in the hand. And that young man, probably out of ignorance, received the Body of the Lord in such an unworthy manner. And imagine, after Mass his parents came up to him, former Catholics, Protestants. They came up to him with reproach, saying: "Son, if you really want to be this Catholic, you could at least be consistent. Because if, like Catholics, you believe that Jesus is in this piece of bread, then you ought to kneel down and receive this bread on the tongue."

OUR LORD TAKEN AWAY

Why is it that Protestants today understand better how to show reverence to our Lord Jesus Christ? What has happened to our Church? "They have taken away our Lord, and we do not know where they have laid Him" — one would like, with an aching heart, to repeat the words of Saint Mary Magdalene, which in this year of the Lord 2021, on this holy night in which Christ rose from the dead, sound terrifying as soon as we realize what the world around us is like.

What do Catholic churches look like today? At the door of more than one of them stands yet another wretch, counting the faithful as they leave. Or perhaps one so brazen that he will go inside to take photographs and write a polite denunciation. And the successors of the apostles are silent. Just as on that Holy Saturday two thousand years ago, they sit locked up in their palaces, in their rectories, *propter metum Iudaeorum*, for fear of the Jews. They sit quietly while the slaughter of their sheep goes on.

Dear faithful, let us therefore seek the Lord, for everyone who seeks Him will find Him. And even if they hide Him from you, even if they seal the doors of the churches, God never abandons those who seek Him. And you will always find Him in the Catholic Holy Mass, on the Catholic altar, to which a Catholic priest approaches. That is, a priest who believes that Christ has risen, has truly risen.

And this I can wish for myself and for you on this holy night: faith that death is not the end but the beginning of new life. And I wish you also from my whole heart that in the hour of death you may be prepared for that moment through the ministry of a Catholic priest, so that in this way you may go, with a clear conscience and a pure heart, to meet the Risen Lord. And may all of us gathered here on this holy night be able, with faith, deep faith, to repeat the words: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.