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Between the Logo- and Iconosphere. Christian Witness of Faith in the Internet

ABSTRACT

The Catholic Church is fully aware of the role that social communication plays in the modern world. In this regard, she sees the media not only as one of the signs of the times, but also as the place of preaching the Gospel message. Cyberspace is of vital importance here, because it offers a gigantic number and variety of pages related to religious topics. Online presence implies a need to search for new languages and communication methods that will effectively reach the recipient with a religious message. There is no doubt that among the various forms of religious expression, witness of the faith of a person practicing occupies a particular place. This paper makes a qualitative analysis of forms and ways in which religious testimonies are present in the cyberspace in a literary genre perspective, with particular emphasis on the role of words and images.

KEYWORDS: christian witness of faith, cyberspace, Catholic church, religious community, mass communication

STRESZCZENIE

Pomiędzy logo- i ikonosferą. Chrześcijańskie świadectwo wiary w przestrzeni internetowej

Kościół katolicki ma pełną świadomość roli, jaką we współczesnym świecie odgrywają środki społecznego komunikowania. W związku z tym uznaje media nie tylko jako jeden ze znaków czasu, ale i miejsce głoszenia ewangelicznego orędzia. Bardzo istotną rolę pełni tu cyberprzestrzeń, ponieważ oferuje gigantyczną wprost liczbę i różnorodność stron związanych z tematyką religijną. Obecność w Internecie implikuje konieczność poszukiwania nowych języków i technik przekazu, które pozwolą skutecznie dotrzeć do odbiorcy z religijnym przekazem. Nie ma wątpliwości, że wśród różnorodnych form wypowiedzi religijnych szczególnie miejsce zajmuje forma świadectwa wiary osoby praktykującej. W artykule poddano analizie jakościowej formy i sposoby obecności świadectw wiary w cyberprzestrzeni w ujęciu geneologicznym, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem roli słowa i obrazu.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: świadectwo wiary, cyberprzestrzeń, Kościół katolicki, wspólnota religijna, środki masowego komunikowania.

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There is no doubt now, that the Internet has become “an indispensable part of everyday reality”.¹ Cyberspace, which is both a means of communication and reception of information, offers almost unlimited possibilities of sharing information globally, exchanging ideas and fostering contacts. By overcoming distance and time, it leads to meeting with another person, which can thus foster mutual awareness and understanding. In this sense, it is itself a positive value. Moreover, the process of continuous extension of the ways and reach of social impact is constantly developing. It is well known that the Catholic Church fully recognizes the media as one of the signs of the time and as a place of proclaiming the Gospel message. We are seeing a multiplicity and diversity of religious websites,² their

1 KLOCH Józef. 2013. *Kościół w Polsce wobec web 2.0*. Kielce: Wydawnictwo Jedność.

2 The macro-scale leaders include the following Polish websites: Opoka, Deon, Wiara, Adonai, Mateusz; ekai.pl, gosc.pl; and niedziela.pl. In addition, diocesan, religious (Jesuit, Dominican) and Internet television channels such as boska.tv or stacja7; Cf. ibidem, 133-205.

evolution, modernization as well as the emergence of new websites. It is a peculiar explosion of interest in the Internet and its use in the Church, as former Archbishop John Foley (former President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication) noted in 2000.³ The post-conciliar documents and Church instructions, above all the *Communio et Progressio* and *Aetatis novae* state that the mass media can perform a spectacular role and have numerous functions related to pastoral activity and the teaching of the Church. The most important tasks are: evangelizing, raising and shaping the faith, building the interpersonal and ecclesial community, and serving the spiritual development of man and his social reality. The popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis repeatedly undertook this subject in their teaching. Benedict XVI in the Message for the XLIII World Communications Day in 2009 (*New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship*)⁴ emphasized the need to value new communication technologies in the perspective of faith:

The new digital technologies are, indeed, bringing about fundamental shifts in patterns of communication and human relationships. These changes are particularly evident among those young people who have grown up with the new technologies and are at home in a digital world that often seems quite foreign to those of us who, as adults, have had to learn to understand and appreciate the opportunities it has to offer for communications.⁵

The Pope then appealed for the effort to evangelize the “culture of the new communication and information environment”, calling for the young people to participate in the digital world. Also, his successor, Francis, during an audience for plenary members of the Pontifical Council for Social Affairs (21 September 2013), pointed out the need to “accompany man in the digital age”. He stated that “the communication space has gradually become a ‘community of life’, a network of knowledge and relationships”, so the role of the Church in this context should be to “establish contact with the people of our time.”⁶ On the other hand, Francis asked, “Can we talk about Christ, what He is for us, in the family, to the people we deal

3 See: „Kronika religijna”. 2001. „Więź” 4:137. More on the topic: DRAGUŁA Andrzej. 2001. *Pan Bóg symulowany. Przyczynek do teologii cyberświata*. „Więź” 1. <http://mateusz.pl/czytelnia/wiez-ad-pbs.htm> published 28. 11. 2016.

4 http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/benedykt_xvi/przemowienia/massmedia2009_24012009.html published on 28. 11. 2016.

5 Ibid.

6 See: LASKOWSKA Małgorzata, MARCYŃSKI Krzysztof: 2016. *Sztuka komunikacji według Franciszka. Bliżej – prościej – głębiej*, 70. Warszawa: PWN.

with in our daily lives? Faith is born of hearing, and is strengthened by the proclamation of it”⁷ (*Lumen fidei*).

By adopting a textocentric point of view, we shall agree with the textural variability, which results in the recognition that every utterance of culture is a text. Therefore, to simplify, one can say that cyberspace integrates textual diversity in the areas of words, images and sounds.

In the multimedia culture, a statement emphasizes action,⁸ and thus puts new demands on the creators and receivers of messages. This phenomenon also applies to religious spheres. The Internet offers – as has already been mentioned – a gigantic number and variety of pages related to religious topics. Semantic and formal diversity is dominant: prayer boxes, prayer banks, online spiritual direction, YouTube, websites like www.godtube.com or computer games. In addition to such websites as Opoka, Mateusz or Jezus, official and unofficial pages of pastors, religious congregations, individual parishes, and lay people have emerged. Their goal is common – acquiring a recipient, exerting influence, shaping attitudes and proclaiming Christian values by developing imagination and religious sensitivity. There is no doubt that if the media are to act as carriers of faith, then the makers of these media must continue to seek adequate language and communication techniques. H. Seweryniak⁹ draws additional attention to the specificity of psychological attitudes produced in a demediated society the new generation shaped by the media is an important part of, which is why the world of new media is so strongly predestined to proclaim the Good News.

Testimony of faith as a form of textual expression

Among the various forms of religious expression, a special place is occupied by the form of religious testimony, a witness of faith (witness of life and word). First, let us try to adopt a working definition and determinants of the term testimony (of faith).

John Paul II devoted much attention to this concept on the pages of *Redemptoris Missio*.¹⁰ Continuing the thought of Paul VI, he said that

7 Ibidem, 113.

8 See: Wyslouch Seweryna.2007. *Nowa genologia-rewizje i reinterpretacje*, W: *Polska genologia literacka*, D. Ostaszewska, R. Cudak (Ed.), 298-299. Warszawa: PWN.

9 SEWERYNIAK Henryk. 2010. *Teologie na „progu domu”*. „Kultura – Media – Teologia” 1: 9-22.

10 John Paul II. *REDEMPTORIS MISSIO. On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, access: 22.11.2017.

“people today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers”. The testimony of life is an irreplaceable form of mission, an imperative of coming out “of ourselves, of sharing the goods we possess, starting with the most valuable asset that is faith”.¹¹ He emphasized the Christological dimension of the testimony. Christ is the ideal “Witness” and the “model of Christian testimony”.¹² In addition, a testimony includes the ability “to make a personal and communal examination of conscience”,¹³ which also refers to ecumenical activity as “witness to Jesus Christ by Christians who belong to different churches and ecclesial communities.”¹⁴ In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*¹⁵ we also read about the duty of secular participation in the prophetic mission of Christ. The task of evangelization is to proclaim Christ “both as a witness of life and a word” in the ordinary conditions of life in the world. And not only within the meaning of the witness of life, but also if “we become missionaries in word or deed” to believers and unbelievers.¹⁶

It must be emphasized that there have been many attempts to define the concept, most often in the theological, sociological and linguistic dimensions. For the purposes of these considerations, we shall assume some of the most essential repetitive features. Małgorzata D. Nowak in her book *Świadectwo religijne*¹⁷ proves that the testimony of faith as a text is a separate genre of expression. The author not only attempts to describe the testimony as a form of written and spoken expression (linguistic methodology), but has proved its importance in religious life “as linguistic behavior associated with modern religious discourse,”¹⁸ established in the modern Polish language. Before we formulate the most important determinants of the testimony as a genre of expression, let us list its most common cited constituent elements. Theologians point to the following factors:¹⁹ personal experience of the subject, knowledge of faith based on the testimony of another person, and orientation to another person in the context of a meeting. In addition, they speak of the sign of the saving presence and

11 Ibidem, 568.

12 Ibidem, 559.

13 Ibidem, 561.

14 Ibidem, 569.

15 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1994. Poznań-Warszawa: Pallotinum.

16 Ibidem, par. 905, 225.

17 NOWAK Małgorzata Danuta. 2005. *Świadectwo religijne. Gatunek – język – styl*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego.

18 Ibid, p. 5.

19 DZIEWULSKI Grzegorz. 2010. *Świadectwo chrześcijańskie jako znak wiarygodności Kościoła*, 75. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego.

action of God (the sign of Christ and the Church), the prophetic and apologetic function, trusting in the words of a witness who has seen God or experienced God in a particular way, and exchanges of information based on facts from the life of a particular person, followed by an invitation to enter the witnessed reality of faith (evangelism). Sociologists see an element of human coexistence and cooperation, the process of communicating values and making them available to individuals and groups, introduction into participation in these specific values, and finally the process of transmitting the truth (within the Catholic Church, with the authority of Christ and the church) revealed in the testimony.²⁰ On the other hand, the linguistic perspective includes the personal expression of the subject's "self" describing their religious experience (manifestations of God in the life of the individual), in which the subject expresses their gratitude to God. Its purpose is to influence the awakening and strengthening of the faith of the recipient. It is an expression of the living religious consciousness, of the dynamics of human faith and of the need to develop it within a community of believers.²¹

A shared element of all the aspects of the definition of the religious testimony (witness) is the message whose content is religious, transcendent, universal and supernatural, expressed within the frame of a given cultural system, with the goal of transcending that system, for it is concerned with the transmission of supernatural content. The sender of this specific message expresses an attitude towards the Absolute and towards one's neighbor, informing about a practical relationship between God and man.²² The key to verifying the authenticity of the content of the message and its source is the religious experience ("what is experienced, what is our participation"²³). To sum up, it can be said that the testimony is "the report of the witness of personally known religious realities ..., the narrative of personal religious experience, which is a special case of inner experience."²⁴

We, therefore, accept that the testimony is a specific textual realization, a separate genre of speech, and a religious universe of speech.²⁵ From the

20 MAJKA Józef. 1980. *Świadectwo chrześcijański jako element ewangelizacji*, W: *Ewangelizacja*, J. Krucina (Ed.), 77-78. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej.

21 PUZYNYNA Jadwiga. 1999. *Jaką jest sens ewangelizacji*, W: *Od Biblii Wujka do współczesnego języka religijnego*. Z. Adamek, S. Koziara (Ed.), 206-2013. Tarnów: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Tarnowskiej "Biblos".

22 See: MAJKA Józef. 1980. *Świadectwo chrześcijański jako element ewangelizacji*, W: *Ewangelizacja*, J. Krucina (Ed.), 79. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej.

23 Ibidem, 82.

24 NOWAK Małgorzata Danuta. 2005. *Świadectwo religijne, Gatunek – język – styl*, 13. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego.

25 Cf. ibidem, 20.

previous research on the subject matter of the genre and the function of this type of expression it can be stated that they are usually the realization of the scheme: before (conversion), then – the moment of interference of the sacrum and the act of entrusting oneself to God (change of narration), now – realization of the transformation of life.²⁶ Józef Majka pointed to yet another dominant aspect of the testimony – the role of the living word in reference to the *fides ex audit* formula (Rom, 10, 17). The “living word” has the power of direct influence on the recipient because it presupposes the possibility of interaction:

It does not mean that words are the most important or that words are enough, but that they are necessary, and that we most often use this means, that is, a living word, that has unmistakable superiority over all other kinds of signs.²⁷

This precise statement turns out to be very accurate with regards to the testimonies that are posted in cyberspace. The protagonists, authors and addressees of testimonies are mainly young people. Like all other forms of communication, religious testimonies found on the Internet have a similar structure – the communication scheme (sender-recipient-message-communication-situation-context). The testimony as a genre evolves entering the digital space as new communication tools also demand new, adequate forms of communication. This is one of the consequences of transformations within the media culture, the specific evolution of verbal culture into (audio)visual²⁸ culture, in which the message is based on word and image at the same time (“iconic phrase”). The picture age has already entered almost every sphere of life. One should not be surprised that it also affects the genre in question.

Testimony of faith in cyberspace

The testimony as a genre of religious expression has been firmly established on the Internet. One can risk saying that there is no single religious (Christian, Catholic) website lacks it entirely. Being a kind of verbal

26 Ibidem, p. 22.

27 See: MAJKA Józef. 1980. *Świadectwo chrześcijański jako element ewangelizacji*, W: *Ewangelizacja*, J. Krucina (Ed.), 88. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej.

28 In the article, I distinguish the spelling between “audiovisualisation” (general phenomenon) and the graphic recording “(audio) visualization”, where the latter serves to emphasize the relationship between the word (spoken) and the image.

behavior, its canonical pattern is, like other modern forms of expression, present in cyberspace, with examples of transgression and hybridization of its form. The direct cause of this phenomenon is primarily the development of a multimedia narration. Beside the verbal plane, audiovisual and visual communication plays an important role. It is, therefore, worth asking the question: what kind of relationship is there between the word and the image?

Online testimonies take on heterogeneous forms and realizations, arising in a variety of circumstances and contexts. From emotionally-charged live-recording at evangelistic events, devotions, community meetings or other events of a purely religious character, to film testimonials (where professional tools as used: montage, script, set design, and film narration) to testimony-interviews with known individuals (actors, music stars, or journalists) and evangelistic actions. The role of witnesses is taken by the clergy and lay people. The Internet provides inexhaustible resources. It is necessary, therefore, to examine only a number of varied but representative examples, both in terms of form and content.

Two types of online testimonies are the most ascetic in terms of the use of visual and audiovisual tools. The first group consists of verbal statements, published in written form, illustrated (e.g. by stock photography taken from publicly available web resources²⁹), acting as a contractual sign representing the speaker; in spite of providing the author's personal data, the real image of the person is not published.³⁰ The recipient should read the graphically preserved text of the testimony, and the iconic material only supports the verbal content. The second group includes audio commentaries supported by visual content. The verbal testimony is recorded and then compiled with a universal poster, a kind of graphic sign or logo. For example, an image of an outstretched hand against a pale pink backlit background is accompanied by testimonies of several people (including the *Testimony by Iza, a former energy therapist*,³¹ or the *Testimony of Ula – a former nun*³²). Another, still minimalist solution, is chosen for audiovisual

29 <http://www.deon.pl/religia/duchowosc-i-wiara/zycie-i-wiara/art,1572,bog-mnie-uratowal-przejmujace-swiadectwo.html>; access 31.11. 2016.

30 The causes of the anonymity of the testimonies and the examination of their reception as well as the impact on the recipient constitute a separate interdisciplinary research problem (sociological, psychological, theological or communicative). Motivations for Internet anonymity seem to have a variety of causes: the issue is not only about the privacy of the witnesses themselves but also of third parties, which could be a source of moral wrong. There are fundamental questions: what moral, material, and legal damages can result thereof?

31 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68JO5rGGeVU> access 30. 11. 2016.

32 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laktSyJvQkc>; ; Testimony of Ula's fight against an evil spirit broadcast by Radio Józef in Robert Tekiel's show "Pocieszenie i strapienie", on 31. 11. 2016.

recordings of people “giving testimony”. An example can be the few – to several minutes long You Tube films, recorded by smartphones or webcams (for example, testimony of a pilgrimage by Paulina, aged 22,³³ a testimony of a teacher named Krzysztof,³⁴ or Jacek, a gynecologist who worked at an in-vitro clinic before his conversion³⁵ and many others). The structure of the testimony includes common structural elements: self-presentation of the individual(s), presentation of the history of life and the presentation of the breakthrough moment. The course of the testimony is reflected by the paradigm: before meeting God, a breakthrough event, transformation of life. The message is communicated and integral information addressed directly to the recipient. A slightly different situation occurs in the (audio) visual testimonies in which we deal with the interference of third parties to a greater or lesser extent (elements of montage, directing, screen setting). Let us look at Justyna’s³⁶ testimony (which is 14:13 minutes long). We are dealing with an integrated operation with visual and verbal narration. The iconosphere is comprised of a contrasting image (black, gray, and white). Each element serves as the background for verbal narration. At the center of the presentation is the image-portrait (the color is reduced to the minimum) of the girl talking to the camera. The light changes are symbolic. The speaker is enveloped by light coming from the side, which reveals her face (eyes) and even more strongly contrasts with the dark surroundings (the contrast symbolizes the symbolic juxtapositions of beauty-ugliness, good-evil). On the other hand, the warm voice of the speaker builds the calm tone of the verbal expression, maintained according to the canonical pattern of a testimony: before (traumatic experiences in childhood, suicide attempts), a breakthrough moment, or encounter with God (seminar of renewal in the Spirit, forgiveness and reconciliation with people; transformation of life), the present day (spiritual and physical healing). The content of the message is articulated against a silent background, while in the final part, the human word is accompanied by a musical passage. The expression is spontaneous, subjective, and deeply intimate. The choice of words is derived from religious language, the specific phrases and terminology are also characteristic of charismatic communities.

Testimonies of faith also follow the convention of film narration as a quasi-documentary or a mini-series. Such a mini-series is represented by a two-part video recommended by an emotional imperative: “See the powerful testimony of a former criminal” and “Tranfsomation. Powerful

33 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNI9dDfjAus> access 13. 11. 2017.

34 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKql3pAGVrs> access 13. 11. 2017.

35 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyBjIBNymZ8> access 13. 11. 2017.

36 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qayM7DbZjY>; access 28. 11. 2016.

testimony of a former criminal”. In turn, the graphic record of the protagonist’s statements, placed under the audiovisual material on the screen, is intended to attract the attention of the recipient. The real name of the witness was revealed. Gabriel Glika uses sayings³⁷ and quotes: *Never, and no one was able to bring me off balance. I always acted cold, with full deliberation, without emotion*, he says. *I was f*cking sick of it. I decided to end this. I decided to shoot myself*. This trick builds tension: shocks, surprises and intrigues (the clue is the use of vulgarity). The testimony is provided in the form of a mini-documentary. A sensational trailer, fast and dynamically changing scenes precede the presentation of the protagonist. He is a man in a jogging suit with a hood on, sitting on a high bar stool. The eye of the camera wanders around the speaker’s body. The mysterious figure is unmasked, revealing his face. Then props typical of action films appear: a black limousine speeding on a highway; a smoldering cigarette, finally a gun pointing at the viewer, then a pool table. From this dark reality emerges the true face of the hero. The viewer sees the opening credits with the name of the producer (Studio INIGO, Deon.pl and WAM Publishing House). Are we dealing with a cinematic quasi-reality? The first words, “everything started in my family home”, are supported by a study of the character (face, profile, silhouette). The narration is extremely dynamic, and the carefully selected musical theme corresponds to the low tone of the witness’s voice. Everything creates an aura of mystery. The theme and rhythm of expression is typical of a testimony as a genre: the problem begins in childhood with the unsettling desire for love and security and the lack of self-esteem (“So I went outside looking for it, unfortunately...”), then there comes rejection by peers from “good homes” and a “career” in the neighborhood gang begins (“It kept on until I became an adult criminal”). The (audio)visual plane harmonically corresponds to the verbal content, complementing it and interpreting. The character, as in the previous example, is visible in the light coming from a reflector, and surrounded by darkness. The words are spoken using correct, literary Polish, accompanied by changing images. It is a specific study of the face, interspersed with American shots of the character. The theme of removing the hood of the sweatshirt is repetitive, as a symbolic exposing of the truth about oneself, taking off the mask. The utterances oscillate around the repetitive meaning of the phrase “being a criminal offender means being a criminal by choice”. It is how they live. Specific slang is referred to: “smoke out, whips, cool babes, dope”. Such is the “before” self-portrait (mask-like expression, composure, cold-hearted “tough guy” pose, lack of emotion), during the process of transformation (“forgive yourself” – “until

37 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXiGRkvCfpI>; access 28.11. 2016.

the day came that I felt my helplessness”; “I wanted this forgiveness, that’s how it started”; “This process is ongoing and I don’t know how it will end”). At this point of the testimony, the hero’s voice and the (audio)visual narration are suspended. Instead of the final credits of the first part, we see an advertisement of G. Glinka’s book *Bandyta*.³⁸ The second part of the video is kept in the same convention.³⁹ The motifs are repeated: the hood is taken off as a symbolic removal of the mask, study of the face and its details, hand gestures. These accompany the analysis of the anatomy of being a criminal. The abyss of nothingness is expressed by the condensation of profanities to deepen the sense of the darkness of evil. In contrast, where positive values are mentioned, there is also a high awareness of the correct language is evident. The verbal and iconic sphere constitute an inseparable whole. Respect for content enforces the (audio)visual aesthetics. Interpretation of an event is created by symbolism of the image (selection of frames, operation of light).

Stylized as an action movie, with fast music video-like scenes, fast pacing and action also appear in other projects like the cycle of testimonies entitled “Amen from Reno” (in one of the episodes Gwen Linde, Colonel of the United States Air Force, tells of her journey to God and the Catholic Church).⁴⁰ Examples can be multiplied. Let us just mention a few worth noting. The “I’m not ashamed of Jesus” campaign,⁴¹ in which persons known from show business and sports give brief testimonies of their faith, testimonies published by the Dobre Media⁴² group, testimonies of the members of the group “Wyrwani z Niewoli” [Snatched to Freedom] (Jacek “Heres” Zajkowski, a hip hop artist and Piotr Zalewski)⁴³ and the spectacular confessions of Fr. Adam Szustak⁴⁴ and actress Patrycja Hurlak,⁴⁵ and finally, Maciej Cieśla’s shocking testimony⁴⁶ which saw the light of day during the WYD in 2016.

38 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qINnFCi2Gk4>; access 1.12. 2016.

39 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0V2U5xz2v7c>; access 1.12. 2016.

40 Production: FranciszkanieTV. <http://www.franciszkanie.tv>. Music: Brat Patefon; Publisher: Province of St. Maximilian of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, <http://www.franciszkanie.gdansk.pl>; access 1.12. 2016.

41 Eg. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmCYF-808Eo> access 13.11. 2007.

42 https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=g%C5%82osimy+Jezusa+%C5%9Bwiadectwa access 13. 11. 2017.

43 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PawDzqGCIsC> access 13. 11. 2017.

44 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfxJT65QN4M> access 13.11. 2017.

45 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByEYRvOBKb4> access 13. 11. 2017.

46 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efx6JcdOTfM> access 13.11. 2017.

Summary

Based on the presented (audio)visual materials' analysis, it can be said that the testimony of faith appears in cyberspace as a separate, autotelic genre that integrates the verbal and visual realities of textual diversity. Words, images and sounds are integrated. Undoubtedly, they are intended to influence the imagination and sensitivity of the recipient, and thereby shape the attitudes of the addressees.⁴⁷ One can say that we are dealing with a phenomenon of hybridization of canonical forms of personal testimony of faith, however, they retain a classic pattern: a description of life before conversion, a change of narrative in connection with the breakthrough event, and the description of the *metanoi*. Let us remember that the basic building element here is the living word spoken from the speaker's "self", in the form of an extremely intimate confession, which contains universal religious values. There is no doubt about the unique role of evangelization in the personal and authentic witness of faith – often in the form of highly emotionally charged account of an inner experience. They are, therefore, a kind of spiritual, individual and subjective autobiographies, showing objectively existing real spiritual spaces in the physical world: the paradox of faith. At the end of the last century, in one of the interviews, Fr. Józef Tischner was asked whether the sacred sphere is something internal or external, objective or subjective.⁴⁸ The philosopher provided such an answer, which may serve as a peculiar and accurate punchline:

On the one hand it is the most objective thing, and on the other the most subjective one. Subjective in the sense that experiencing the sacred touches the deepest, very personal layers of the human being, hence it is radically individualistic. And on the other hand, it is something the most deeply objective. Because the sacred justifies the greatest sacrifice of man, including the sacrifice of life.⁴⁹

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47 The examination of the efficiency of shaping the attitudes of the subjects of the discussed forms goes beyond the scope of this study, but it undoubtedly constitutes an important aspect of the influence of the witness as a tool of evangelization in the contemporary communication reality.

48 „*Sacrum wiąże się z dobrem człowieka*”. *Rozmowa z księdzem profesorem Józefem Tischnerem*. 1997. „*Polonistyka*” 7: 389.

49 *Ibid.*

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