

Remembrance of Jews in contemporary catholic homilies

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1. Introduction

If texts are building blocks and carriers of collective memory (cf. Chlebda 2018, Czachur 2018, Wójcicka 2018), a reflection of this function that cannot ignore religious texts. It seems that in religion, texts (understood semiotically, not only verbally) as carriers of memory play a particularly important role, because memory has a key meaning in this sphere of social (and individual) life. In her book *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, the French sociologist D. Hervieu-Lèger, accepts – as a determinant of religion – the belief of the followers in the continuity of the faith, the reference to the “witnesses from the past,” and thus the inscription in a “religious line” (Hervieu-Lèger 1999: 97 et seq.). Anthropological and religious studies have shown that religions pass the knowledge of something that happened at *source*, at the *beginning*, that is a *sacred* history on to future generations (cf. the notion of myth, Armstrong 2005, Eliade 2017). Events from the past, read as a contact between man and *sacrum* (cf. *hierophany*, *epiphany*) must be revived in the followers’ consciousness because – according to the philosopher – remembrance is still the same force that makes them a community. What is important is both collective memory and individual memory of spiritual or mystical experiences,

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which maintains a religious relationship even when elevation and emotions subside (Welte 1996: 218 et seq.). In Judeo-Christian prayer, remembrance takes the form of *an anamnesis*, a mention of God's great works (*Mirabilia Dei*) (see Schaeffler 1988). The Christian *Eucharist* is a remembrance of Christ's death, but at the same time – as the Catholic Church teaches – the presence of His sacrifice and the anticipation of His second coming; the solemn celebration of the memory of Christ's love is to constantly awaken and revive faith and sustain its salvific power. According to the *New Testament*, the memory that produces such effects is the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14, 26)¹.

The importance of remembrance in religion is also due to the fact that sacred texts are usually subject to the imperative of inviolability and unchangeability. They have the authority of divine revelation, the residuum of mystery; they are credited with legal force, the status of *locus theologicus* – the sources of theological truths (cf. Havelock 2007: 34; Małunowiczówna 1993: 16; Nadolski 1980). Their unchangeability also guarantees the preservation of continuity and purity of tradition, and thus of one's own religious identity (as in Judaism, Christianity or Islam). "In the sphere of worship, speech and its forms of expression rise above the freedom to dispose of language and become untouchable" (Welte 1996: 234).

The memory of source religious events, as well as their interpretations, elucidations, etc. (cf. (e.g. the *deposit of faith, doctrine, teaching, Tradition*) serve both the spoken and written word. All the great historical religions went through the stage of orality. Various mnemonic techniques helped (and are helping nowadays to some extent) to remember and be faithful to the message – fixed compositional patterns, syntactic and intonation parallelism, anaphora, rhyme, rhythm (see Ong 1992: 59; Małunowiczówna 1993: 16). Continuous transmission of content and forms of worship is also supported by ritual (cf. Welte 1996: 235; Burkert 2006:42) and ritualisation – ritualised communication scenarios, language rituals (functioning of ready-made formulas, templates, clichés; cf. Makuchowska 1994, Wojtak 2005). Continuity and stability of the message, however, is best served by writing. After its spread, the oral transmission was recorded in the so-called *books of saints* (*Vedas*,

¹ John Paul II, *Eucharist as a reminder of Mirabilia Dei. Catechesis in a general audience on 4 October 2000* [https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/jan_pawel_ii/audiencje/ag_04102000.html] (accessed 11.11.2018)

Upanishads, Torah, Old and New Testament, apocrypha, etc.) (see Obirek 2010: 48–97), and during the course of history, a rich religious literature was created, which is now multiplied by the religious press, especially by the possibilities of the Internet. Written forms of communication, however, did not exclude speaking (cf. oral genres in religion, such as sermons, homilies, commentaries, catechesis, etc.), while new media (television, radio, computer) develop the so-called secondary orality.

In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, literacy was the most important triumph (Burkert 2006: 235 et seq.), but – as S. Obirek (2010) shows – this triumph had its price. Oral communication maintains contact with the source experience, maintains the bond between the speaker and the listeners; it gives a sense of participation in the proclaimed content, has a dynamic, dialogical and negotiating character, because it is in lively conversation and in specific circumstances that the meaning of the message arises. Scripture, on the other hand, preserves and imposes one meaning, the creative dialogue no longer has a place, the point of reference is what has been written and how. The message is stiffened, preserved, ossified, and instead of the authority of the witness, which in the oral phase was the speaker, the authority of the text appears (Obirek 2010: 133). Moreover, the transition from one form of communication to another entailed changes not only in the way the message is conveyed, but also in the very content of what is conveyed. As the research on the Gospel of St. Mark shows, a record of events is not a simple transfer of the narrated content into a written work, but a deconstruction of orality and the emergence of a new quality on its “ruins” (Kelber 1983, cited in: Obirek 2010: 134). This new quality was created both by the evangelist’s conscious decisions, his critical attitude towards the current oral tradition, the aims of the new faith, as well as the ontology and “grammar” of the writing itself, independent of the author. One cannot believe, therefore, that the Gospel account of the life and death of Jesus is a continuation of what eyewitnesses remembered and recounted.

2. Purpose and scope of the paper

The above findings constitute an important context for the issues addressed in this paper, as they concern the way of creating the memory of Jews in contemporary homilies, created by Catholic priests in Poland, and in fact not

so much the creation as the (specific) transfer to homilies from the Christian Bible. In Catholicism, homily, according to the definition of the genre, is a discussion, development, or explanation of the so-called biblical pericopy (see Lewek 1980: 31–32), which is a fragment of the Bible to be read on a given day of the liturgical year, according to the so-called *Mass Lectionary*. Biblical readings and the homily commenting on them together form a part of the Holy Mass called the liturgy of the Word of God (Sinka 1994: 184 et seq.) or form an act of proclamation of the Word of God. In light of theology, the one who preaches the homily is the instrument through which God Himself speaks (see, for example, Przyczyna 2014: 147 et seq.).

For my analysis, this means that although contemporary preaching will be at the centre of attention, the source texts correlated with it, i.e. biblical texts, and specifically Christian gospel passages, must be introduced into the field of vision. Due to the problem I want to highlight, these will be texts where among the characters of the world depicted there are Jews as negative heroes. This analysis was based on the observation that such biblical pericopies, which for many (important) reasons require professional commentary based on modern exegetic knowledge, as well as psychological, sociological, anthropological knowledge etc., in the current homilies their development in the form of a common, deeply rooted in tradition, even mechanically reconstructed schema, can be found.

Below I will try to document and present this phenomenon. I will start with a negative image of the Jews in the texts of the *Holy* Scriptures, and then I will move on to the ways of developing the image in the exemplary material that I have collected, consisting of fragments selected from among about 40 homilies (distributed on Catholic internet portals, but also heard directly in the church).

3. Jews in mass readings

The presence of Jews in the world presented in the Catholic liturgical texts results from the doctrinal content of this religion. The Jews belong to the religious history of Christianity (or rather Judaeo-Christianity): God entered into the history of mankind by covenant with Moses and the Israeli people, and Jesus fulfilled His saving mission as a Jew, among the Jews and with their participation. Continuous reconstruction of this history belongs to the

essence of worship; it is the centre of religious life of Christians. The canon of texts describing this history, i.e. the *Bible*, was adopted at the beginning of Christianity (around the middle of the fourth century), and it was considered to be inspired by God Himself, and thus true and unchangeable. At the same time, the so-called Roman canon was also established, i.e. the rites of the Holy Mass, which include public reading (and then explaining and reflecting on) selected fragments of the holy books.

In the *Mass Lectionary*, readings for particular days of the liturgical year are arranged in cycles, i.e. for Sundays and celebrations – in cycle A, B and C (so the same texts are repeated every 3 years). The first reading is from the Old Testament, the second from Apostolic Letters or Revelations, the third from the Gospel. On weekdays, there are two readings, arranged in two annual cycles (1 and 2), with evangelical readings having only one annual cycle. The first reading of the Old Testament is chosen to harmonise with the Gospel (Sinka 1994: 184 et seq.).

As a consequence, remembrance of the Jews, in a once (and in bygone days) solidified form, has been passed on to future generations of Christians to this day. Some knowledge about them, a certain image that is connected with this concept, is created in the minds of Christians by simply going to church, participating in masses and services, listening to (and also jointly reproducing) the texts functioning there. For a Christian practitioner, the concept of *Jews* does not remain empty, even if they learn nothing about them from any other source.

The subject of Jews in the *New Testament* has already been taken up many times by Christian biblical studies because the negative features of their portrait recorded in these texts cannot be denied (see, among others; Szeffler 1976; Mussner 1979; Porsch 1989, Kuśmirek 1992). The problem is even considered as a question about the “anti-Judaism” or even “anti-Semitism” of the holybook of Christianity (e.g. Leistner 1974; Czajkowski 1987). In this respect, the Gospel of St. John in particular has been studied. The word *Jews* (*Ioudaios*) appears 71 times in St. John’s Gospel, and colours it most strongly with a feeling of reluctance. In the other three Gospels, the word *Jews* (used 16 times in total) also occurs in unfavourable contexts, and negative senses are also combined with other descriptors, such as *Pharisees*, *high priests*, *Sadducees*, *headed*, *elders*, *scholars in law*, *scholars in writing* (Leistner 1974: 47 et seq., cited in: Kuśmirek 1992: 122).

The sequence of evangelical pericopies creates a story in which Jews, throughout the whole period of Jesus' public activity, behave in a hostile manner towards Him, deny faith in God's sonship and messianism, do not believe His words or miracles, constantly try to kill Him, set traps, and finally falsely accuse Him and lead Him to His crucifixion; after Christ's resurrection, they persecute His disciples. During Lent, the Jews in the readings are presented in the worst light, especially during Holy Week, when the Passion of the Lord is considered, and during the Easter period; but, in the so-called ordinary period, there are also scenes co-creating this unfavourable image. This content is familiar; however, in order to better illustrate the scale of its presence in mass readings and to look more carefully at the explicit way of expressing it, I quote below a number of passages (using boldface, I mark phrases and expressions which, in the most direct way, by the semantic value of the words used, create an image of aggressive actions of subjects marked as Jews):

At this the Jews there began to grumble about Him because He said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven" (John 6, 41–51; 19th Sunday of the ordinary period, year B);

Jews started persecuting Jesus [for having healed a paralytic on the Sabbath]² (John 5, 1–3a. 5–16; Tuesday after the 4th Sunday of Lent);

For this reason they tried all the more to kill Him all the more; not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God (John 5, 17–30; Wednesday after 4th Sundays of Lent);

Jesus did not want to walk on Judea, because the **Jews intended to kill Him**. [...] **They intended to capture Him** (John 7, 1–2. 10. 25–30, Friday after the 4th Sunday of Lent);

When He decided to go to Judea for news of Lazarus' disease, He heard from His disciples: "But Rabbi," they said, "**a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you,** and yet you are going back?" (John 11, 1–45, 5th Sunday of Lent, year A);

Again the Jews picked up the stones to stone Him. And again **they tried to capture Him** (John 10, 31–42, Friday after the 5th Sunday of Lent);

[parents of the boy healed from blindness] **were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue;** [when the boy didn't respond as they wanted],

² The information in square brackets is my own summaries.

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the Pharisees **hurled insults at Him and threw Him away** (John 9, 1–41, 4th Sunday of Lent, year A);

But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they blasphemously contradicted what Paul was saying. [...] But the **Jews incited** the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and **instigated a persecution** against Paul and Barnabas, and **drove them out** of their district (Acts 13.14.43–52; 4th Easter Sunday, year C);

[Jews] [...] won the crowds over. They stoned Paul and dragged Him outside the city, presuming He was dead (Acts 14, 19–28; Tuesday after 5th Easter Sunday).

The reading on Good Friday shows Pilate's efforts to free Jesus, but the priests and *the crowd* there demand His death. The crucifixion itself is carried out at the hands of the Romans, but the Gospel shows the Jews as the inspiration for this event:

From then on, Pilate tried to release Him, **but the Jews kept shouting**, “If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who declares himself a king is defying Caesar” (John 18, 1–19, 42).

A series of this kind of pericopies lengthens fragments in which there are other descriptors (mentioned above), but which can be assumed to be related to Jews by the Catholic believers. I will quote just one example, from the fourth Sunday of year C, where the subject of hostile actions was designated as *all the people in the synagogue*, and from the previous context, it appears that they were residents of Nazareth (this is a pericopy ending with a known sentence, *No one is a prophet in their own land*):

On hearing this, all the people in the synagogue were enraged. **They got up, drove Him out of the town, and led Him to the brow of the hill** on which the town was built, in order to throw Him over the cliff (Luke 21–30, year C).

Due to the exceptional authority of Jesus, the words spoken directly to the Jews by Him have a special meaning:

But because you are not my sheep, you refuse to believe (John 10, 1–10; Tuesday after 4th Easter Sunday, year C);

You are from below; I am from above. [...] That is why I told you that you would die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am He, **you will die in your sins** (John 8, 21–30, Tuesday after 5th Sunday of Lent);

But you are trying to kill Me because My word has no place within you (John 8, 31–42, Wednesday after 5th Sunday of Lent).

It is clear, therefore, that the negative features of Jewish heroes are outlined with a clear line, in a completely legible way, using means from the most cognitively accessible language resources. Meanwhile, as we know, the Second Vatican Council in the fourth part of the declaration *Nostra aetate*, then the post-conciliar Church in subsequent documents³, firmly renounced and banned all anti-Jewish attitudes. The last sentence of the document, *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* reads: “[...] the spoiled seeds of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism must never again be allowed to take root in any human heart”. Negative biblical content is also a problem of Christian-Jewish dialogue. Daniel J. Goldhagen, in his book published in 2005 titled, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair*, expresses the conviction that no change will ultimately solve the problem of reluctance towards Jews until the Church removes the very source of evil, which is the constant proclamation that the Jews killed Jesus. The author postulates removing certain fragments from the *Gospel* or adding appropriate comments⁴.

4. Research on *Jews* in the gospels

In addressing this problem, exegetes undertake, among other things, a thorough semantic analysis of the word *Jews* in the gospels, especially in St. John's. They show that the lexeme *Jews* as a negative trait do not once appear as an ethnonym that would mean ‘the whole Jewish nation,’ each time refer-

³ They are: *Guidance and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration “Nostra Aetate”* No. 4, 1974; *On the correct way to present the Jews and Judaism in preaching and catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*, 1985; *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, 1998. The papal teaching is also normative for the entire Catholic community, and Pope John Paul II said a lot about this subject.

⁴ The inconsistencies are also pointed out to the Church by Fr. Romuald Jakub Weksler-Waszkinel, pointing out that the editorial title in the *Millennium Bible*, which is enshrined in a passage from the Gospel of St. Luke (13, 22–30), reads “Rejection of the Jews.” In *Breviary*, there is still an erroneous translation of the Good Friday prayer in which, instead of praying for “the people who were chosen as first (*populus prioris acquisitionis*), we still pray for “the people who were **once** chosen;” the text of John Chrysostom: “The Jews murdered Jesus and I harvested the fruits” has not been removed, either (Fr. Romuald Jakub Weksler-Waszkinel, *Antisemitism without Jews*, [https://prasa.wiara.pl/doc/460206Antysemityzm-bez-Zydow]).

ring to a specific group of Jesus' opponents, who were representatives of the central Jewish authorities. The sharp tone appears in the polemic with the Pharisees and Sadducees, who rejected his teachings, but it does not apply to all those who believed in it, and who were also Jews. The current sharpness of Jesus' statements may also be the result of a time and cultural distance between the then and present viewers, and a lack of knowledge of rhetorical styles typical of specific situations and communication intentions of the time and place. The modus of certain statements of Jesus might have resulted, for example, from the use of a rhetorical form for polemics with renegades (Mussner 1979: 286; cited in: Kuśmirek 1992: 127).

It has also been proposed that the historical context in which the gospel came into being and the functions that they had to perform at the time be taken into account. In short, the task of the Christian gospels was to build and defend the identity of the new community, which grew out of Judaism but was separated from it, and this, as we know, is best served by deepening the distance, exacerbating differences, introducing conflict into the narrative and weakening the position of the competitor. The goal of *The Gospel of St. John* was therefore persuasive, aimed at gaining and strengthening supporters of the new Church. The dynamics of the evangelist's work show the separation between those who "grumbling" came to believe in Christ, and those whose enmity grew more and more until they grasped Him and brought Him to death. "It reflects the division that occurred inside the synagogue," explains A. Kuśmirek (1992: 131). "John's community believed that it was faithful to true doctrine; the others did not understand it. The stereotype of the representation of Jesus' opponents as Jews has arisen because of the decisions that have taken place between Judaism and Christianity. The same applies to the motivation of the image of Jews in the *Gospel of St. Matthew*, as Fr. J. Lemański writes (2004).

This issue is also illuminated by research on oral issues. As we read in S. Obirek's book on the gospel of St. Mark, the vision of the world presented in it bears traces of earlier functioning in oral communication, and prefers simplified images, rather than characters; fighting rather than consent. The simplified image of the Jews emerges from the episodes of their confrontation with the heroism of the main character, and Jesus' teaching is directed to a world divided into enemy camps. The moment of writing history was connected with taking a position, and this (as in the case of St. John) was

marked by the aims of the new faith. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Church of St. John of God had already set the goals of the new faith. The emphasis of the narrative was not on Jesus' life, but on His death and resurrection, because it was these events that were to become the foundation of Christianity (see Obirek 2010: 132 and 138).

The word *Jews* also appears on the pages of the gospel in a neutral and positive light, e.g. in the sentence: *salvation is from the Jews* (John 4, 22) and in the passage: *Therefore many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in Him* (John 8, 31; 11, 45). Jews, however, were apostles, friends of Jesus, crying out for a *hosanna* at the entrance to Jerusalem (which commemorates the Palm Sunday⁵). However, the fundamental content of Christianity is the message of salvation, which was accomplished through the cross. As the theologian writes, the proclamation of God's Word in the Church shows:

[...] all that God has done for the salvation of man, that is the works of salvation done in the past, especially the Passion, death and resurrection of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit. They are all recorded in the Bible, updated in the liturgy and explained in the homily over the course of the year (Przyczyna 2014: 147).

The series of pericopies therefore highlights not the history of those Jews who believed in Jesus, but of those who did not recognise the Messiah in Him. In discursive terms, Christianity develops one of the (possible) discourses – the one in which the Jews play the role of leading Jesus to death by crucifixion and salvation. On the other hand, the presence of the “positive” Jews (valued in this way, of course, from the point of view of this discourse) is not emphasised; they are only elements in the background, who easily escape the attention given to the distinguished figures – all the more so because with the figures of the “good” Jews (due to the mechanisms which cannot be discussed here) Christians identify themselves, additionally blurring the contours of the former. The image of the “evil” Jews practically “appropriated” the scope of the word *Jews*, generalising its meaning (“all Jews”), and moreover, it became a source of symbolic, negative meanings with which the word became a sign of the world of disbelief, enemies of Jesus and Christianity.

⁵ It is worth mentioning, however, that in the song for this celebration, there is a reference to *Hebrew children* (carrying olive branches) and not to *Jewish children*.

An insightful look at the gospels makes us aware of the need to be conscious of – what might be summarised as – the interpretative depth of these texts (even if the awareness is not necessarily rich, detailed knowledge). Only with such awareness we should create homilies around them.

5. Context of readings and homilies

It is worth noting that the whole picture of the Jews, which can be created in the mind of the faithful, is influenced by various contexts (textual, situational, cult, cultural, etc.). The full image of the Jews is created by all three readings, New and Old Testament, the contents of which complement and illuminate one another. It should also be remembered that readings appear in the context of the whole ritual, which consists of songs, prayers, reflections, etc. The broader context of the masses are the services, as during Lent there are *the Stations of the Cross* and the *Lenten (Bitter) Lamentations*, and even non-verbal texts in the church, i.e. sculptures and paintings depicting the *Stations of the Cross*. All this creates a certain structure of knowledge – a diagram or a script (to refer to cognitive instruments, see e.g. Stockwell 2006: 112 et seq.), introduced to the memory of Catholics through participation in worship, catechisation or reception of Catholic media (e.g. press, radio, television). It is also created by the consumption of secular culture, such as watching one of the films about the life of Jesus and His Passion, e.g. “The Passion” directed by Mel Gibson. This structure of knowledge (which only very young children probably donot yet have) is an interpretative framework, which makes the image of the Jews co-create even those cult texts – biblical and other – where there is no question of the Jews directly and indirectly. On this principle, for example, all the places where the enormity of Christ’s suffering is mentioned, where the nature of His suffering is not culpable, build an image of cruelty or – as it is customary to say in the history of Polish religious language – Jewish acrimony. This is easily visible in the liturgy of Good Friday, during which the Passion of Jesus is read, and preceded by the reading of Isaiah (Isaiah 52, 13–53, 12), suggestively depicting Jesus’ torment:

Just as many were appalled at [His sight], His appearance was disfigured beyond that of any man, and His form was marred beyond human likeness [...] Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief.

The followers, knowing the contents of their religion, know well who (physically in a historical sense) inflicted this torment on the Saviour. Likewise, they know whose infidelity Jesus complains about in the song, *My people, what have I done to you?*

6. Jews in homilies

How, then, are the pericopies, in which Jews act as negative heroes, commented on? I must admit that this question came to my mind during the homily that I heard in my parish church. I was curious to what extent such a schematic, stereotypical interpretation is a phenomenon more widely present in contemporary Polish preaching. Of course, I do not claim that all homilies currently being created in Poland are so schematic, but the fact is that I found the exemplary material presented here very quickly and without difficulty. Most of the material shown below (from [1] to [15]) are homilies based on a pericopy intended for the 29th Sunday of the normal period of year A, i.e. in a passage of the gospel of St. Matthew, ending with the words of Jesus, *Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's* (Matthew 22, 15–21). In order to document this phenomenon, I am presenting below a rather long series of excerpts from those homilies, in which I have boldfaced the measures that are particularly clearly marked by evaluation and/or repetitive judgements:

[1] **The Pharisees, wishing to put Jesus to the test** [...] Certainly, in the long run, this question and the Saviour's answer could have been used to formulate an accusation against Him during Pilate's trial. [...] But the Son of God foresaw the **cunning and perversity of the Jewish leaders** and answered with a question: "Whose are the image and the writing?"⁶

[2] The Pharisees' desire to get rid of **Jesus** with the hands of the occupants, **for His teaching reveals their sins**. If they prove that He dissuades from paying taxes, He will be convicted.⁷

[3] **In the Gospel just read, we see the trickery that the Pharisees and the followers of Herod Antipas (Herodians) wish to use to grasp Jesus**. What **ambush** did they come

⁶ <http://dziennikparafialny.pl/2014/xxix-niedziela-zwykla-19-x-2014-komentarz-do-ewangelii/>

⁷ <https://www.ekspedyt.org/2014/10/19/slowo-boze-na-dzis-19-pazdziernika-2014-r-niedziela-bl-ks-Jerzego-popieszki-dzien-misyjny/>

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up with this time? [...] The Pharisees **want to put Jesus off guard** in order to **strike at Him out of hiding**. How? By posing a **very cunning** question about whether one is allowed to pay taxes. In any case, Jesus was **trapped**⁸.

[4] The scene from today's Gospel shows us **how perversity of the Pharisees is still timely**. This is a simple idea. After all, it is enough to provoke the other in such a way that the whole odium of a bad answer falls on the respondent, not the questioner. [...] Being aware of the **perverse question**, they were already prepared to condemn [...] The wisdom of Jesus did not give them the satisfaction of **dragging Him into a political intrigue** [...]⁹.

[5] **The Pharisees were still looking for weakness in Jesus. They wanted to prove by force that He is a liar and a blasphemer. They put Him to the test in order to catch Him on some mistake. They sniffed and followed** to find His, even the slightest, imperfection. **They fell into a kind of obsession that led them to spiritual blindness. They were unable in the miracles performed by Jesus, in His care and love, to recognise the announced Messiah.** The rationale was to be on their side. Recognition of God in Jesus meant failure for them¹⁰.

[6] The Pharisees' **insidious question** about paying tax is preceded by a polite introduction, a gesture of respect towards Jesus [...]¹¹.

[7] Jesus does not flee from the **perfidious trap** of the Pharisees [...]¹².

[8] This is already the 29th ordinary Sunday and today's Gospel passage, in which the **perversity and corrupt hearts of the Pharisees come to the foreground**¹³.

[9] Listening to the Word of God for a long time, we see a growing **conflict** between the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes and the Lord Jesus. **This conflict is, of course, provoked by the former**, who at **all costs want to eliminate** the self-proclaimed Jewish king from public life. The **crime and wickedness of that world matures**, but also the determination of the Son of God, who wants to fulfil the will of His Father to the end [...]¹⁴.

⁸ <http://www.slowo.redemptor.pl/pl/4617/9045/xxix-niedziela-zwykla.html>

⁹ <http://liturgia.wiara.pl/doc/420119.29-Niedziela-zwykla-A>

¹⁰ <http://liturgia.wiara.pl/kalendarz/67b56.Refleksja-na-dzis/2017-11-03>

¹¹ <http://www.profeto.pl/strony/nie-oddawac-cesarzowi-tego--co-nalezy-sie-bogu--xxix-niedziela-zwykla> (19 X 2014).

¹² <http://www.profeto.pl/strony/lectio-divina-na-xxix-ndz--zw---a->

¹³ <http://www.profeto.pl/Page/Search?search=cezara>

¹⁴ <http://www.profeto.pl/Page/Search?search=cezara>

[10] Once again in the Gospel we meet the Pharisees and the scribes. [...] They also **rejected Jesus Christ, not wanting to believe in Him and recognise Him as the Messiah** [...] **They tried** to catch **Jesus at all costs** [...] ¹⁵.

[11] The Pharisees, sent by the so-called “scribes and elders,” **ask Jesus a very insidious question:** to pay or not to pay tax¹⁶.

[12] But Jesus also speaks to the **hypocrites who set a trap** on Him. The **aim is to exterminate the Jew** who as the Messiah spoke one truth to all people. Addressing the tax problem was only an insidious **tool**. The interlocutors and hypocrites put to **the test the Presence and Name** of the Supreme. **They wanted**, perhaps not quite consciously, to meddle God Himself in the sick politics of the world – to **politicise Jesus and kill Him**. [...] ¹⁷.

[13] [...] We therefore look at another event in the life of the Master of Nazareth – this time connected with the **attempt to catch Jesus in His words**, and then be able to accuse Him. [...] Let’s note that the Pharisees have a well-prepared plan; they know how and what to ask Jesus to embarrass Him. [...] **they ask an insidious question:** [...] He knows that the purpose of this meeting is not to seek the truth, but to **set a trap on Him**. The Son of God knew their true intentions, their **hypocrisy**¹⁸.

[14] Faced with this question, Jesus immediately **exposes the hypocrisy** of His interlocutors, who do not want to know the answers to His question, but only to capture **Jesus as he speaks**. [...] We hear two questions in today’s gospel [...]. The former is completely earthly and **moved by the devil**; the latter is heavenly and divine. The first is the effect of **ignorance and malice**; the second comes from wisdom and perfect goodness¹⁹.

[15] The Jews of Jesus’ day did not **want to hear of the Messiah the Suffering Servant** who was to come as the Paschal sacrificial Lamb. **They wanted a victorious King**, who would establish a perfect kingdom, the order of an ideal society²⁰.

The cited material shows that in homilies, the same assessments are repeated and – more importantly – amplified and exaggerated, sharpening the negativity in the Pharisees’ images. In the source texts, i.e. in the gospels of St. Matthew (as well as of St. Mark, the second synoptic gospel), there are words with negative judgements, but there are few of them in Matthew:

¹⁵ <http://www.profeto.pl/strony/slowa-pana-4>

¹⁶ <http://www.profeto.pl/strony/jak-nie-wiadomo-o-co-chodzi--to-chodzi-o->

¹⁷ <http://www.profeto.pl/strony/dwie-monety-i-dwa-napisy-1> (2017)

¹⁸ <http://www.profeto.pl/strony/mowi-do-nich-1> (2017)

¹⁹ <http://www.orygenes.pl/oddajcie-ceszarowi-to-co-nalezy-do-cezara-a-bogu-to-co-nalezy-do-boga-mt-22-15-21/>

²⁰ <http://liturgia.wiara.pl/doc/420119.29-Niedziela-zwykla-A/3>

But Jesus was aware of their evil motives. "You hypocrites!" He said. "Why are you testing Me?"; in Mark: Later, they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to catch Jesus in His words. But He recognised their evil intentions. But He recognised their hypocrisy. In homilies, on the other hand, there are many more and varied means of emphasising the evil character of the Pharisees and their hostility towards Jesus. Homilists eagerly exploit the gospel term *perversity, hypocrisy* and the phrase *to catch Jesus in His words*, but they add a whole series of negative judgements and terms from each other, creating a complex picture of the Pharisees who come out of the scene as fierce persecutors of Jesus, consistently (and even obsessively – cf. passage [5]) striving to kill Him (which is most clearly and in a rather peculiar way expressed in passage [12], that the aim is the *extermination of this Jew*²¹).

It is hard not to notice that it is an imaging in line with the historically shaped stereotype of the Jews and that it is from these stereotypical images that the inventive material of the analysed homilies is derived. This is primarily a stereotype established in traditional Christian texts or, in other words, carried by a traditional Christian religious discourse which corresponds to other stereotypes²², but has its own profile, linked to the role of Jews in the history of salvation as those who crucified Christ.

From the catalogue of features forming this stereotype, *perfidis* is the most conventionalised (cf. *aperfidious trap* from passage [7]; see Blumenkranz 1952: 157–170; Tokarska-Bakir 2008: 45). Until the middle of the 20th century, the title *Pro perfidis Judeais* was given to the Good Friday prayer for the Jews, and their *treachery and ingratitude*, as the Latin was translated, motivated the compositional figure of the whole works (e.g. the song *My people, what have I done to you?*, which is a complaint of the tormented Christ about the ingratitude of fellow countrymen forgetting the blessings described in the *Old Testament*, see Korolko 1977: 33). Nowadays, the word *perfidious* can be found in a synonymous line created by such lexemes as *perverse, hypocritical, deceitful, crafty, and malicious*, from which homilists draw. The

²¹ The peculiarity of this phrase is, of course, due to the fact that the words *extermination* and the *Jew* appear together as an expression of the *extermination of Jews*, meaning the Holocaust by Nazi Germany.

²² I am referring to the fact that in other discourses, the stereotype of a Jew may contain different contents and refer to differently designated Jews, e.g. in popular discourse, it may be the stereotype of Jews – members of Polish society remembered from the recent past, or contemporary Jews living in Israel.

elements that develop the psychological portrait of the antagonists of Jesus refer to the convictions about the existence of a “Jewish disposition” or “Jewish psyche,” radically different from Christian models and motivating their moral behaviour, and also fundamentally different from Christian ideals (cf. Pałka 2006: 138). The “Jewish psyche” caused *spiritual blindness* (cf. [5]) and moral corruption (cf. *the corrupt hearts* [8], *the crime and wickedness of that world* [13]), which prevented the Jews from seeing the Messiah in Jesus, from recognising Him in His *miracles, care and love* (cf. [5]); rather, on the contrary, they ordered them to hate and seek to kill Him whom God had sent for their salvation. To the west developed in the Catholic discourse, there is also a thought (presented in the passage [15]) that because of narrow-mindedness, the Jews understood the idea of messianism in a down-to-earth and materialistic way, expecting not so much a spiritual kingdom, but the exaltation of their own nation and the abundance of temporal goods (cf. Pałka 2006: 143n.). The modus of Jewish activities, well planned, is also stereotypical in character (cf. *have a well-prepared plan* [13]), but planned in secret and being insidious (cf. *insidious question; very cunning question; trickery, trap, ambush, setup; cunning, hit from hiding, putting vigilance to sleep, lurk, sniff, follow*). Of course, there is a scenario included in the notion of Jewish *plotting* as well as the motif of the Jewish conspirator, which has been preserved in the European culture (cf. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, see Tazbir 2010). The action of the Jews is also characterised by the already mentioned *acrimony*, which the homilies also create (*they wanted to prove by force* [5], *they wanted to eliminate at any price* [9], *to catch Jesus at any price* [10]). In one of the homilies (passage [14]), we encounter a demonic image of the Jews, instigated by the Devil himself (on the subject of associating, or even identifying, Jews with the Devil, which began in the Middle Ages, see Trachtenberg 2011).

Let us note that the schematic thinking is accompanied by stereotypical expressions – in principle, the same repertoire of rhetoric means is repeated: to *grasp/catch/capture Jesus in His words, to test Him, seize, set a trap, insidious question*. It seems that words conventionally associated with this particular pericopy are encoded in the minds of homilists together with their established sense.

The submission to stereotypes can also be seen in homilies based on other pericopies, e.g. from the 4th Sunday of the ordinary year C, which depicts

a scene from the beginnings of Jesus' public activity when He taught in Nazareth and when His countrymen wanted to knock Him down from the slope of a mountain. This is how the meaning of this event is commented on:

[16] **Blinded by the human reflex of jealousy**, "they cast Him out of the city and led Him to the slope of a mountain... to knock Him down"²³.

[17] Jesus walked in great peace among the people who wanted to knock Him down from above. The people who drove Him there turned their admiration into **frenzied rage**. False love easily transforms into **true hatred**. [...] What bruise on the souls of the people of Nazareth Jesus revealed in His words? Those people were not able to forgive themselves that they actually rejected God and made Him a "deity!"²⁴

[18] The **unwillingness** to accept God's Word in all its fullness, in the likeness of the inhabitants of Nazareth who lived in Jesus' times²⁵.

Also in this case, the narrative does not aim at understanding the motives of the characters who were somehow determined by a specific situation (historical, political, psychological, etc.), the then horizon of knowledge, etc., all that is called *Sitz im Leben* – the *context of life* that should be taken into account in exegetic behaviour (see Lohfink 1987: 29–35). On the contrary, the homilists judge the participants of the event from the point of view of their own knowledge, unconsciously assuming that already then, in the times of Jesus', that knowledge was freely available to everyone. So, it is easy to explain that the rejection of Jesus' doctrine resulted from the personal vices of the Saviour's countrymen – blindness, jealousy, hatred, reluctance, a tendency to violent reactions (cf. *frenzy of rage* [17]), and the immoralities that make up the traditional canon of Jewish vices; the vices that are, without much intellectual effort, automatically accepted as truth.

The succumbing to stereotypes can be seen not only in those passages of the homily that speak directly about Jews, but throughout the entire speech. It is about the ways in which the message for the contemporary viewer, i.e. the updating of biblical readings, showing their meaning *here and now*, for the life of a particular person, can be derived from the pericopy. The purpose of homilies, and at the same time their content, is a religious and

²³ <https://liturgia.wiara.pl/doc/420033.4-Niedziela-zwykla-C/2>

²⁴ <https://liturgia.wiara.pl/doc/420033.4-Niedziela-zwykla-C/3>

²⁵ <https://diecezjasandomierska.pl/iv-niedziela-zwykla-c-2/>

moral instruction, a warning against improper behaviour towards God and men; it is simply against sin. In establishing the link between pericopy and homily, one speaks of sins analogous to those which, in light of a homiletic interpretation, were revealed by the Jews in an evangelical pericopy. For example, the homily from which the passage [5] comes, and which (let us recall) proclaims that the *Jews were still searching for weakness in Jesus; they were sniffing, following Him in order to catch Him in some mistake*, offers the believers the following soliloquy:

[19] When I do not want to appreciate someone's goodness, success, beauty, I behave like the Pharisees. I have a negative opinion when someone does not fit my imagination. I am sad that they are better than me at something. I am looking for weaknesses, I see their success as failure, and I suspect impure intentions, because I still love too little. If I don't start looking positively at others, I will eventually become blind to goodness, miracles, and God's love.

The homily from which the passage [16] comes, which attributes jealousy to the Pharisees of Nazareth, considers possible situations in which *we* (the addressees of the text²⁶) may also (out of blindness, out of jealousy) not see contemporary prophets in our immediate surroundings and underestimate people just because they are from our closest circle. The concluding text of the prayer expresses the instruction that Mary taught *us to accept the truth and get rid of pride*.

Passage [17] comes from a homily, the meaning of which is difficult to understand; however, it seems to enigmatically attribute to the Jews, and at the same time to *us*, some kind of hypocritical relationship with God, false love for Him, committed wickedness and hatred felt because of an unclean conscience. The pericopy inspired the homilist to reach the following conclusion:

[20] The greatest hatred a man is able to bestow upon those whom He has wronged most for their suffering is the evidence of wickedness. We can hate God because He proves to us that we treat Him like a beggar who is thrown out of the door, like a thief to be lost, like malice responsible for all our misfortune.

²⁶ The forms of the 1st person plural number mean what is known as *pluralis homileticus*, i.e. they refer to the addressees in which the homilist includes himself.

And the last example – a passage of a homily for children, which teaches them the features of *the Pharisees*:

[21] Some bad features of human character are sometimes referred to as Pharisaic features. In the attitude of the Pharisees, **perversity** appeared, and its opposite is straightforwardness and sincerity. Abusing human straightforwardness and credulity is the wrong attitude. People sometimes pretend to be kind and respectful to their interlocutor, although they think and speak badly about them. We say about such people that they are two-faced. **Perversity** can affect everyone: the little and the big, the poor and the rich, the artist and the politician, and so on²⁷.

Using boldface, I emphasised the word *perversity* because its (two-time) appearance confirms the existence of a coupling between what is said about Jews and what means are used for it; both the content and the form seem to be components of the stereotype, and both of them maintain its vitality in collective memory.

7. Long life of the motif

In the homilies I studied, the concept of *Jews* functions in a typical sense as the personification of sin, as a symbol of the rejection of Jesus – and thus of God; the rejection of the bond with Him, of His love, etc. Jews are an anti-paragon or rather a prototype of negative behaviours, attitudes, views, etc., stigmatised by homilists. The pericopies in which they appear instigate to reproduce a historically established stereotype and do not show that they stimulate its deconstruction. The Jews referred to in *the Bible* are treated as figures with “known” symbolism; they have become completely clotted and unambiguous in their “roles”, like in a painting or bas-relief. While this is done in relation to other characters (in the so-called historical exegesis, which reduces the time and space distance between the hero and the viewer), in relation to Jews, there is no desire to see real people living in them and to try to understand them somehow, to penetrate their position, state of knowledge, fears, etc., to empathically consider how we ourselves would behave in similar situations. The knowledge of psychological and sociological mechanisms, demonstrated by other topics, is somehow not applicable in this field.

²⁷ <https://pastoralis.pl/ambona/homilie-niedzielne-i-swiateczne/xxix-niedziela-zwykla-homilia-dla-dzieci-1/>

Apparently, any “justification” of the Jews who persecuted and killed Christ does not fit into the rules of this discourse. It is recognised that the “truth” about their role, character, etc. is confirmed by the authority of the *Bible*, especially the words of Jesus Himself, and the gospels are treated literally, as a faithful record of the reality that once happened, without taking into account the constructivist character of these texts, that is, *de facto*, without the application of contemporary exegetic, historical or anthropological knowledge (despite six years of philosophical and theological studies that each priest must undertake).

Instead of scientific knowledge, thinking about Jews is still, as you can see, ruled by the overwhelming power of tradition, two thousand years of accusing them of murdering Christ-God out of hatred and permanent loathing for Christians (cf. Cała 2012). The motif of the Jewish killing of God, which arose in the early Middle Ages (Melito of Sardis, John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, etc.), alive (or more and more alive) for centuries of Christianity, shows an exceptionally long life (in the sense pointed out by Braudel, see e.g. Braudel 1971), and despite the declaration of the last Council (often referred to as a breakthrough), it is still doing well. *Nostra aetate*, the document *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* from 1998 and other statements that make up the so-called Christian-Jewish dialogue are still the elements of the official discourse of the Catholic Church in Poland, but in ordinary everyday practice they do not, as we can see, precipitate from deeply established thinking habits²⁸ and do not motivate a revision of firmly rooted judgements.

Perhaps the forty or so texts that I have collected for this analysis are not much, but it should be taken into account that they have been disseminated on Catholic Internet portals, so someone not only created them, but also accepted them; someone decided that they can be recorded in writing and made available to the general public (free of charge, by the way; paid homiletical materials are also offered, which limits access), and nobody ordered their removal. This significantly multiplies the number of people whose sensitivity to the transmission of bad memories of Jews is not profound. Furthermore, there are no control mechanisms to ensure that the content published under the auspices of the Church is consistent with the Church’s teaching.

²⁸ W. Łukaszewski writes about psychological studies confirming the existence of thinking habits (2018: 181).

Biblical pericopies read in churches depicting Jews as negative heroes constitute linguistic and textual “memorials” about them; they reproduce the centuries-long process of memorising the image of Jews persecutors and assassins of Christ. Left to themselves, without proper commentary, they inevitably saturate the concept of *Jews* with negative meanings. However, since they are inviolable as saints, other texts (homilies, but also the abundance of other species that the Church has at their disposal) must effectively counteract the sowing of “poisoned seeds of anti-Judaism.” However, the homilies referred to in this paper do not only sow the seed, but, whether consciously or not, they water it.

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Remembrance of Jews in contemporary catholic homilies

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Wójcicka M., 2018, *Język pamięci zbiorowej (w kontekście kultury oralności, piśmienności i elektoralności). Prolegomena. – Pamięć w ujęciu lingwistycznym. Zagadnienia teoretyczne i metodyczne*, ed. W. Czachur, Warszawa, p. 68–93.

Remembrance of Jews in Contemporary Catholic Homilies

The paper discusses the problem of transferring the memory of Jews through Polish contemporary Catholic homilies. In the biblical pericopies read throughout the liturgical year during Catholic mass, generally Jews play a negative role – as persecutors and killers of Jesus. According to the provisions of the Second Vatican Council, anti-Jewish content cannot be proclaimed in the Catholic Church, and the *Bible*, which according to the doctrine must remain unchanged, should be adequately commented on in homilies. The paper – on the example of about 40 homilies – shows, however, that priests who preach homilies do not use modern exegetic knowledge, but replicate stereotypes deeply rooted in culture, thus reproducing the centuries-old myth of the Jews as killers of God.

Keywords: *Polish Catholic discourse, Catholic homilies, Jewish stereotype, anti-Judaism*