

RYSZARD HAJDUK, C.S.S.R.

Activities of st. Clement hofbauer

As example of putting things in pastoral context

1. The significance of context for pastoral reality; 2. – Typical broad outlines of Clement's pastoral activity; 2.1 His pastoral zeal; 2.2 Sensitivity to spiritual needs; 2.3 His passion for proclaiming the Gospel; 2.4 His efforts in forming laypeople; 3. The pastoral response of St. Clement to the challenges of his age; Conclusion

The Catholic church comes face to face with many difficulties related to the social movements of our time, especially: secularization and lay movement. We observe a permanent erosion of the Christian faith. We note that not a few people have lost their faith in the Church. As members of the Catholic church, we must listen day after day to harsh criticism of Christianity.

And in this situation, the Church does not have to lose hope and should not give up. Our priests must interpret everything that happens as a sign of the times and give a pastorally efficacious response. Above all they should not lose hope, despite the fact that their efforts are not very efficacious. They must learn to deal with many defeats. Still more: the Church, at the same time is calling us to a New Evangelisation to respond to the challenges that come from our present social-ideological context. For this reason, Pastors should not become distrustful and passive, but work with the whole church, reacting to the call to evangelize in all areas of their pastoral activity, full of fervor and dynamism (EG, #17).

A typical example of ministry put into context, which is dynamized by someone zealous in proclaiming the gospel, we can see in the person of St. Clement Mary Hofbauer (Dwoiak); who was born in the year 1751, in Tasovice (Moravia). Even though he saw his vocation as the priesthood, he became a baker; because he did not have financial resources for his studies of theology. Only after he became a Redemptorist in Rome, did he receive his priestly ordination, in 1785. In 1787, he arrives in Warsaw, where for more than 20 years, he pursued his pastoral activities, in a very zealous manner. After the Redemptorists were expelled from Warsaw, in 1808, Clement arrives at Vienna; where he pursues his priestly ministry as Chaplain of the Ursuline Sisters; as extraordinary preacher and confessor, until his death in 1820. Also today,

his priestly wisdom shows the importance of adapting one's pastoral ministry to a specific, concrete, context to announce to people the joy of living with Christ and his Gospel.

1- THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "HERE AND NOW" REALITY FOR PASTORAL MINISTRY

Pastoral ministry should be directed to each specific individual person, taking into consideration their social, economic and political context; and also the tendencies of a specific age, which affect the manner of thinking and the day to day reality of the persons.¹ From this focusing on reality, comes the assumption of putting things into context, which demands a person to take into consideration the specific characteristics of the situation and culture and ideology in which arise specific pastoral challenges. This understanding of the mission of the People of God in the world today, is presented by Pope Francis to promote a sensitivity to the local customs and challenges (cf. AMORIS LAETITIA, no. 3). At this time, there arises the question of inculturation, which consists in respecting values which are coherent with the Christian tradition, which are present in a manner more or less pure, in a specific culture, and in the seed of those new values which come from the Gospel. Moreover, the process of inculturation aims to extract those Christian values which had lost their clarity in the culture which has been evangelized, or had disappeared over time (cf. REDEMPTORIS MISSIO, no. 52, 54).

The process of inculturation deals with taking into consideration the situation in which are living those people who are being reached out to in the Church's mission. The extent in which the values that are promoted and brought about by society, fulfill the most important role, arriving at having a significant influence in the behavior and thinking of individuals. The task of pastors is to "look with one's eyes and listen" (EVANGELII GUADIUM, n. 46) and "listen attentively to the people" (EVANGELII GAUDIUM, no. 154) in order to recognize the human needs that are present, and respond to them with pastoral activity. Also, one must take into account the global context in which the church is living and acting. As much as the near context; that is: the specific personal and public experience, as the broader context which the culture, the philosophical tendencies and diverse social dynamisms create: the actual philosophical and social processes, have an effect on pastoral practice.²

Familiarity with the broader cultural context does not only permit one to investigate common pastoral problems; but also gives a push forward to make needed changes in pastoral practice³. With discernment, what and how one should speak and act in a certain context; the pastoral ministry can be pursued with great wisdom; that is, according to the LOGOS. Then, the pastoral activity is transformed into truth and love (cf. EF 4,15)⁴. Continuing on, in pastoral

¹N. METTE, *Trends in der Gegenwartsgesellschaft*, in: H. HASLINGER, *Handbuch Praktische Theologie*, vol. I. *Grundlegungen*, Mainz 1999, 76; D. NAUER, *Seelsorge. Sorge um die Seele*, Stuttgart 2007, 202.

²E.Y. LARTEY, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World*, Eugene 2013, 70-71

³G.M. FURNISS, *The Social Context of Pastoral Care. Defining the Life Situation*, Louisville 1994, 74-75.

⁴A. NOSSOL, *Chrześcijańska proegzystencja – istnienie i życie dla innych*, in: *Collectanea Theologica* 2 (1979) 13; J. PATTON, *Pastoral Care in Context. An Introduction to Pastoral Care*, Louisville 2005, 78.

activity, it is communicated to people that which God wants to say to them in a concrete, specific, situation; and those who are sent on God's mission in the Church, respond to the questioning which appear in their hearts and souls⁵.

The Church calls us to the putting into context of our pastoral activity with the help of the method: "See, judge and act":

This method implies reflecting on God with the eyes of faith by means of his Word revealed and the life-giving contact of the Sacraments; so that, in our daily life, we see the world around us in light of Divine Providence, and we judge this reality according to Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. And we also perform our actions, taking the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ and universal Sacrament of Salvation, as our starting point, in growing the Kingdom of God, which is sown as a seed on this earth, and which comes to full fruition in the Heavenly Kingdom.⁶

The attention which is directed to people in their existential situation, shows how God directs himself to man in the mystery of the Incarnation. Making good use of the very important force of the Gospel, serves to show each reality and happening as a reality which is submitted to the grace of God. And there appears the question: "Just what is God's will for us?" And this question implies not only the best way of doing things in the Church; but also, obliges us to make our decisions about making pastoral decisions that are adequate for this context⁷.

The first step in the method VER, consists in taking a look at the reality of the situation, precise and free from any pre-conception. That vision is not simply an analysis of the social situation. Observing the most routine daily activities means to pay attention, with total respect, to the life of a person in all their simplicity and fragileness. This is the act of faith which transforms the reality, because in this way, it is shown to the persons how God himself directs himself to them. Faith is an essential dimension of this perception; and because of this, appears not only in the second phase, which is defined as TO JUDGE. In the same way, the third phase— to ACT—the changing of reality, and activity—already is present in the stage TO SEE⁸.

Saint Clement Mary Hofbauer was universally known as a man of living and burning faith⁹. This faith helped him to persevere in realizing his most important pastoral motto: "The Gospel

⁵ S. BEVANS – R. MANALO, *Contextual Preaching*, in: E. FOLEY, *A Handbook for Catholic Preaching*, Collegeville 2016, 234-235.

⁶ CELAM, *Discípulos y Misioneros de Jesucristo para que nuestros pueblos en Él tengan vida. „Yo soy el Camino, la Verdad y la Vida” (Jn 16,4). Documento conclusivo*, Aparecida 2007, n. 19.

⁷ V. PRÜLLER-JAGENTEUFEL, *Sehen – Urteilen – Heilen*, en: M. E. Aigner, A. Findl-Ludescher, V. Prüller-Jagenteufel, *Grundbegriffe der Pastoraltheologie*, München 2005, 188-189.

⁸ S. KLEIN, *Erkenntnis und Methode in der Praktischen Theologie*, Stuttgart 2005, 74.

⁹ H. HOLBORN, *A History of Modern Germany 1648-1840*, Princeton 1982, 501; L. VEERECKE, *Duchowość św. Klemensa Marii Hofbauera*, in: *Św. Klemens Hofbauer – patron jednoczącej się Europy*, Kraków 2001, 62.

must be proclaimed in a new way”¹⁰. In light of this conviction, he examines the surrounding reality to give a response to the existential questions of contemporary people with Christ’s message by means of his pastoral activity. Therefore, he feels obligated to constantly adapt the forms of his priestly ministry to the specific needs of the individuals who live in the Age of the Enlightenment.

TYPICAL BROAD OUTLINES OF CLEMENT’S MINISTRY

St. Clement was born to serve God as a priest. And his personal vocation to the priestly life was strengthened by the charism of the Redemptorists, which is fulfilled in faithful service to those who search for God and are hungry for the truth of the Gospel. The passionate and ardent love for the poor, carried Fr. Hofbauer always where he could fulfill his apostolic vocation with complete selflessness, not only in Warsaw, but also in Vienna: as missionary, as spiritual advisor and confessor, as preacher and as formator of committed lay apostles.

2.1—APOSTOLIC ZEAL

Even though St. Clement was born in Monrovia, it was in Italy that he became Redemptorist, priest, and missionary. It was there that he became familiar with the main activity of the Redemptorists, which consisted in preaching popular missions. In this activity, various Redemptorists brothers were in a parish for two or four weeks, and preached the Gospel each day in the morning and in the evening, in order to animate the Christian faith and also to renew the parish life. In Poland, these missions were almost impossible; and later during the Prussian occupation, were totally prohibited. Because of the religious needs and lack of understanding the Faith, Fr. Hofbauer began the “Perpetual Mission”. He writes: “So that one may preach the sermon frequently to the people, this “Perpetual Mission” must be present to their life. Because here Missions are prohibited by the State; and cannot be realized without the express permission of the political authorities. During seven years authorization has not been given”¹¹

Thus, the small church of St. Benno was changed, during various years, into the center for religious life in all of Warsaw¹². Despite the fact that this church was located between two other, more well-known churches, the church of the Redemptorists, who were soon called “Bennoites” by the population of Warsaw, could not fit all the people who went there daily for prayer. On Sundays and Feast Days, the church was filled with folks who came there for mass.

¹⁰ H. SCHERMANN, *Św. Klemens i redemptoryści*, in: *Św. Klemens Hofbauer – patron jednoczącej się Europy*, op. cit., 138.

¹¹ A. OWZARSKI, *Die immerwährende Mission in der Kirche von St. Benno in Warschau*, in: H. SCHERMANN, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer. Profil eines Heiligen*, Wien 2001, 73.

¹² A. HORTELANO, *Clemente Hofbauer en diez lecciones*, in: *Ser Redentorista según san Clemente Hofbauer* (Espiritualidad Redentorista, 4), Comisión de Espiritualidad CSSR, Roma. Editorial Kimpres, Santafé de Bogotá 1994, 143-155.

The religious services stretched from early morning till nighttime, everyday, with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and processions, fitting music and sermons filled with ardent zeal, which were preached not only in Polish, but also in German.

Fidelity to the Catholic Church, fervor in celebrating the religious services, occasional, rare, visits to various aristocratic families; all of this gained for the Redemptorist missionaries respect and veneration. With rain, cold and heat, the Warsaw people arrived from the farthest neighborhoods to participate in the different celebrations of St. Benno. Many youth with a sense of vocation, talent and good reputation were entering the Congregation of the Redemptorists. There were many witnesses who spoke about the great popularity of the church of ST. Benno. The people of Warsaw visit the church each day for Confession, for listening to the preaching; and highlighted the kindness with which they were received there. Artists, factory workers, craftsmen and servants...the whole population met together in the church of the new city of Warsaw.

The center of all the pastoral activity of the Redemptorists in the church was the Eucharist. Each day, the high point of the day's activity was the celebration of the Eucharist, with great musical accompaniment. Because of this the priests gave special emphasis to a very careful organization of the various celebrations. They wanted to motivate the faithful not only by the spoken word. St. Clement thought this way: by enriching the content of the services ever more and beautifying the religious services even more, in this way the human heart is awoken more and more for God and the faith. Fr. Hofbauer was convinced that "the people understand about God more by what they see than by what they hear"¹³. For this reason, the church, the altars and the statues were always adorned with candles, flowers and rugs. During the ceremonies they always used the most beautiful vestments available. The faithful people of Warsaw used to say that this church was blessed by God because it continued its "permanent mission"¹⁴.

Where the church of the Redemptorists awoke most admiration was the solemn celebration of religious services with accompanying music and singing. This deserves to be especially highlighted because it distinguished itself from the austere spirit of the time of Enlightenment and Jansenism. The Redemptorists put great emphasis especially on the liturgy and the preaching of the Good News. Everyday there were sermons five or six times per day, in various languages: Polish, German, and occasionally in French. In the afternoons, the priests gave religious instruction to the children¹⁵.

¹³ A. OWCZARSKI, *Die immerwährende Mission in der Kirche von St. Benno in Warschau*, op. cit., 67.

¹⁴ ¹⁴ MH XII 236

¹⁵ R. DECOT, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer (1751-1820): zu seinem pastoralen Wirken*, in: *Theologie der Gegenwart* 44 (2001) 86.

The Redemptorists in their church, together with the celebration of the Eucharist and preaching of the Gospel, made their principle efforts in celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation. The priests went to the confessionals early, at five in the morning, and attended confessions until the night. Only at mid-day, they had a rest period of two hours. In this way, the Redemptorists gained the reputation of good Confessors and spiritual directors. The more devout Catholics, priests and more fervent and knowledgeable Catholics, always chose the Redemptorists as their personal Confessors. They were esteemed not only in Warsaw, but also in neighboring towns and villages.

2.2—SENSITIVITY TO SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF THE TIME.

After the Redemptorists left Warsaw, St. Clement arrives in Vienna, where he was not able to found a religious community. However, he found a way to continue with his pastoral ministry. He lived in a small residence with his Redemptorist brothers, in which he himself occupied two small rooms which were permanently open to visitors. The persons who visited him were simple people, students, writers, artists, diplomats and government employees who chose Fr. Hofbauer as their spiritual director.¹⁶

During his spiritual conversation, St. Clement never tried to influence psychologically those with whom he conversed. For him, the most important thing was to proclaim to all the truth about Christ. His personal empathy also manifested itself in this attitude. People who were disillusioned because of the Church, who did not want to speak with any priest, entrusted to St. Clement their doubts and questions; and he always found a word of support and orientation. He had a sense for noticing people whose life was overcome with despair. And St. Clement's words helped them to find again some direction for their lives. His spiritual assistance of conversation and spiritual direction was done with utmost discretion; however he had an important influence, because many people in his intellectual circle later on fulfilled an important role in renewing the Church life at that time.¹⁷

St. Clement was faithful to the Redemptorist style of spiritual direction. Not only in Warsaw, but also in Vienna, he gave great importance to confession. During his time in Vienna, in the coldest winter, he used to go at four in the morning to the suburbs, to the Church of the Mecharista Fathers, where he sat for three hours in the confessional. From there, he went to the church of the Ursuline Sisters. When he arrived there, his confessional was already besieged by penitents, who were waiting for him. And when he returned home, there were people waiting there in front of his room, to open their hearts to him.

¹⁶ A. BAZIELICH, *Św. Klemens Hofbauer – patron Wiednia i apostoł Warszawy*, en: *Św. Klemens Hofbauer – patron jednoczącej się Europy*, op. cit., 45.

¹⁷ O. WEISS, *Begegnungen mit Klemens Maria Hofbauer (1751-1820)*, Regensburg 2009, 65.

His advice was short, serious and good; and he left an unforgettable impression. There was a phrase, which he always repeated, which his penitents always remembered: "Have courage; God is in charge of everything!"¹⁸ In confession, Fr. Hofbauer did not put himself in the center as a Pastor who orientates his people; but rather he helped the people to discover an aspect of their spiritual life, in which these same persons discovered a new principle for their day to day living. He had the gift of discernment of spirits which his penitents were able to easily recognize; because St. Clement was able to see "through to the heart"¹⁹.

At times his instruction in the confessional was very unique. Next to the confessional, he placed a recipient full of water. If his penitent had something especially heavy on their heart, he took a stone and threw it into the water. "In this way, as the water totally engulfs this stone", he used to say to the penitent, "that is how the Savior's love engulfs all of your sins".²⁰

2.3 – PASSION FOR PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

When St. Clement preached in Vienna, the church was full including the last seat and all available space. It is very curious: we know that, according to the information of the State Police, the style of preaching of St. Clement was very common and unusual²¹. He was someone who preached to the common people. His examples he took from the lower social class; his stories and expressions were directed to simple and unlettered folk²²

There were however, testimonies of others who appreciated St. Clement and the high level of his sermons. Sophie Schlosser, a well-educated woman, used to say: "He preaches in a very dogmatic way, but at the same time highly uncomplicated and easy to understand, so that even a child could understand him; and despite everything, his preaching contains the highest level of wisdom. At the same time during his conferences, he was so good and kind that spontaneously one felt affection for him."²³ Another listener expressed his opinion about the preaching of St. Clement: that they were incredibly attractive; people from all social classes rushed to listen to them and use them for their own spiritual growth. Despite the fact that his sermons were uncomplicated; even then, they caused a strong impact on people in high society and those with university education.²⁴

St. Clement did not have any extraordinary talent for communication. He preached with a strong foreign accent, at times, searching for the correct expression. The hearers could not

¹⁸ R. DECOT, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer (1751-1820): zu seinem pastoralen Wirken*, op. cit., 92.

¹⁹ MH XI, 27.

²⁰ O. WEISS, *Begegnungen mit Klemens Maria Hofbauer (1751-1820)*, op. cit.,

²¹ H. SCHERMANN, *Św. Klemens i redemptoryści*, op. cit., 138; O. WEISS, *Begegnungen mit Klemens Maria Hofbauer (1751-1820)*, op. cit., 64.

²² MH XIII, 39.

²³ MH XII, 269.

²⁴ H. SCHERMANN, *Św. Klemens i redemptoryści*, op. cit., 138.

recognize any systematic structure to his sermons. But without doubt, they were quite impressed to see that the preacher reinforced his words by the way he lived. The sermons of St. Clement were not especially refined; but despite this, through his preaching, he showed himself to be a person who was highly intuitive and deeply aware of human psychology. For example, once he said: "If a baby falls down, it stays fallen where it fell, does not move, and cries and shouts and becomes bruised; but an adult gets up again and continues on their way".²⁵

We do not have any sermons of St. Clement preserved for us. Some outstanding phases from his sermons have passed down by word of mouth, and have become part of history. He prepared for each sermon with much prayer; he preached about God's self-revelation to explain his meaning in a new time. His sermons were not an elaborate structure; and came from the heart and were very live and dynamic. He did not moralize; but rather the preacher began from the simple biblical message, and he aimed to proclaim church doctrine in simple, clear expressions.²⁶

He knew how to preach God's word in a captivating way, to the point that even more cultured people were captivated by his preaching. They said that the content of one word from his mouth was sufficient for them for the whole week. Intellectuals simply noted that he spoke as one who did not simply repeat formulas, but rather spoke from the bottom of his heart. He had never studied public speaking. His sermons absolutely lacked any special elegance. Certainly, he had never read any of the secular writers who wrote in German. He spoke the language of his listeners not totally perfect, linguistically, but showed himself to be a true disciple of Christ; and because of this, spoke as someone who had force and power. In this particular time, it was not possible to find another speaker like him, whose word communicated what was really needed²⁷.

2.4 – HIS WORK IN FORMING LAYPEOPLE

St. Clement was aware that the Catholic faith could not be reduced to celebrations and sermons²⁸. Because of this, he organized new communities and groups which went out to meet the religious needs of the people. In Warsaw, his schools, the church of St. Benno and the "Oblates" were a mark of his activity. In Vienna, Clement Hofbauer was active in informal groups, circles of students, artists, poets' societies, intellectuals and others.

The literary activities of St. Clement Hofbauer were an important part of his spiritual ministry for people with academic titles, students, professionals and others during his years in

²⁵ A. FENZL, *Das pastorale Wirken Hofbauers in Wien*, en: H. Schermann, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer. Profil eines Heiligen*, op. cit., 97.

²⁶ R. DECOT, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer (1751-1820): zu seinem pastoralen Wirken*, op. cit., 90.

²⁷ A. FENZL, *Das pastorale Wirken Hofbauers in Wien*, op. cit., 98.

²⁸ R. DECOT, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer (1751-1820): zu seinem pastoralen Wirken*, op. cit., 99.

Vienna. Durante such activities, which took place in rectory, some religious or historic writing was read, and afterwards, the participants exchanged ideas about its content. These meetings gave to their participants important direction for their lives.

Father Hofbauer made great effort to always make available good books for Catholics—priests and lay people. In Warsaw he had organized a library. In Vienna, there had existed already for many years a library. And Fr. Clement asked his friends and benefactors to take charge of renewing and bringing up to date this library. In this way a new library appeared in the heart of Vienna.

Another initiative of Fr. Hofbauer was to publish the religious and literary magazine: “Olzweige”, which appeared in Vienna three times per week, during the years 1819-1823. This magazine, faithful to Catholic tradition, presented the ideas and feelings of the St. Clement circle and of Catholic romanticism in Vienna. Basically, this magazine dealt with a holistic approach to Catholicism, which includes not only the intellectual part of people; but also motivates the person in a holistic manner: together with their heart, intelligence and corporality.

According to the German historian from the time of national socialism, Karl R Ganzer, the religious education of laypeople reminds us of the time of “Catholic Action”²⁹. St. Clement built up a movement of laypeople, together with performing spiritual exercises, which had the purpose of infusing public life in all its dimensions with a spirit of Roman Catholicism. These lay apostles appeared in different parts of society. During his travels, St. Clement extended these organizations throughout all of Germany. In this movement, the more influential persons exercised a special role.

When Fr. Hofbauer arrived at Vienna after a trip away, there met with him these different circles of people, in which participated men and women, nobles and ordinary citizens, lettered people and artists, diplomats and Monsignors. These circles of people were not closed in on themselves, but some of the people were more closely knit with the groups; while others had only superficial relationships with these circles. Before the Congress of Vienna, the center for religious renewal in Vienna was focused on the circle around Fr. Hofbauer³⁰.

The activity of Fr. Hofbauer came to its highest point during the Congress of Vienna; even though he himself remained in the background. Before the Congress began, a circle of intellectuals which was meeting two times per week had been formed in the nearby city of the Hungarian Count Francisco von Szechenyi. It is known that Fr. Hofbauer had been decisively responsible for the conversion of Count Francisco von Szechenyi from masonry to Catholicism.

²⁹ K.R. GANZER, *Der heilige Hofbauer*, Hamburg 1939, 33-34.

³⁰ R. DECOT, *Hofbauer in «Gespräch» und Auseinandersetzung mit seiner Zeit*, in: H. SCHERMANN, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer. Profil eines Heiligen*, op. cit., 55.

In the Szechenyi circle, in which Fr. Hofbauer had a very important position, men of the Ultramontane (a centralizing tendency, respecting the authority of the Pope at that time) orientations, used to meet frequently together. We cannot say for certain if St. Clement had a decisive influence on this group. Despite the fact that St. Clement Hofbauer is called “the priest of political Catholicism”; he did not deal with politics as such; except in the sense of restoring a sense of Roman Catholicism; that is, of renewal within the Catholic Church. The role of St. Clement consisted in the fact that he was a priestly and spiritual presence in these intellectual circles. It was notable his active and significant presence in this political dimension of the Church; while following an orthodox, Catholic vision of things; which was one more fruit of the circumstances of his personal initiative³¹.

3—THE PASTORAL RESPONSE OF ST. CLEMENT TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE AGE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT.

St. Clement Mary Hofbauer lived during the Age of the Enlightenment and modern society during the 18th and 19th centuries. In Austria, under the Emperor Joseph II, all types of popular devotions were frowned upon: pilgrimages, indulgences, devotion to Mary; devotion to the saints, confessions, eucharistic communion, fasting, the rosary and public display of the Catholic faith disappeared almost completely from public life. And also, a large part of the important themes of traditional Catholic faith could not be touched on. The sermon was supposed to deal with educating people and forming them as useful citizens: the focus of the preaching was morality; any sermon about faith was not desired³².

The Enlightenment understood often that man is composed only of reason; and that faith is more than a moral behavior; and personal piety requires and pre-supposes a correct human attitude towards things. But the Church reform according to Emperor Joseph II, also abolished some exaggerations from the Baroque era and many superstitious costumes. This reform gave a central role to spiritual accompaniment; and for this purpose created smaller parishes. The reforms of Joseph II placed a strong emphasis on catechetical instruction and formation of priests.³³

In this situation, ST. Clement felt the need to proclaim the richness of the gospel in a new way³⁴. This need to proclaim the gospel in a new way demanded that he adapt his means to a situation of specific, concrete, persons, in the circumstances and according to the possibilities of understanding the Christian faith.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 58

³² *Ibid.*, 96.

³³ K. FLEISCHMANN, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer. Sein Leben und seine Zeit*, Graz – Wien – Köln 1988, 32.

³⁴ R. DECOT, *Hofbauer in «Gespräch» und Auseinandersetzung mit seiner Zeit*, op. cit., 65.

In pastoral work, the methods, strategies and theories it seems, are indispensable. However, St. Clement Hofbauer presents a convincing example that all these items have their limitations and offer a relative value. He worked with the motivation of his faith and together with the profound unity of faith and life. He was a true spiritual priest who focused on his own person and his personal convictions, not counting only on those persons who put their faith in him. In his particular situation, he was proclaiming the Gospel in a new way.

A true spiritual priest, on one hand has great love for God and his brothers and sisters; but also has a true instinct which points to him what has to be done or left undone at a particular time and in particular circumstances. St. Clement Hofbauer, after his arrival in Vienna, knew instantly to what he should be dedicating himself. He was opposed to certain theological currents coming from the Protestant Enlightenment, and even more opposed to the pseudo-mystical exaggerations in Catholic theology and piety, and especially against a unilateral “rationalization” of religion. However, St. Clement understood the pastoral and administrative reforms begun by Emperor Joseph II. He was a conservative priest who examined everything and stayed with all that was worthwhile (cf. 1 Tess 5, 21).

St. Clement’s desire was to live the interior life in the spirit of Christ in a new way, within the traditional structures of the church. In his character and his piety, we find also some tendencies of the Enlightenment. He recognized the needs of the time, and gave a great importance to education. In the synthesis between a popular religiosity in general and an “interior” piety, he was able to arrive at a new encounter with the message of the Gospel which had to be always proclaimed in a new way.

The Enlightenment did not see any space for a Catholic faith supported simply by dogmas, and the primacy of the Pope and the hierarchy; but rather in an active Christian faith which identified itself in loving one’s neighbor and right living. In the 18th Century, the Jansenistic vision of the church combined with the Catholic Enlightenment. And Fr. Hofbauer fought against both of these tendencies. He promoted a Catholicism which proclaimed dogmas and marched in strict relationship with the Pope in Rome and the bishops. For our saint, it was very important that the church be a place where one could experience great vitality. If he did indeed have a clear vision about the precarious situation of the Roman Curia; he always emphasized faithfulness to the Pope and Rome.

The most important quality of the Enlightenment was the great value it gave to reason. The promoters of the Enlightenment believed that man’s reason is able to know the whole of reality in the world. And Reason was the most important aspect of human nature. For this reason, religion also should help men in the reasonable understanding and bettering of themselves and the world they live in.

St. Clement placed man in the center of all his pastoral activity. He did not pertain to that group of thinkers that did not recognize the value of the human intellect. Clement knew that Christians should promote everything that is truly catholic and religious, and which needs also the presence of real religious instruction; that is, the divine truth that enlightens human reason and carries it towards a *metanoia*, to renewing its thinking processes³⁵.

According to Clement, man is not simply an intellectual being. Man possesses not only reason, but also spirit and emotions. For this reason, he always strove to celebrate religious services in a very solemn way³⁶. Father Hofbauer proclaimed his conviction that people had to be touched also in their feelings to open themselves to hearing the Good News. For him, the external beauty of the religious services, music, candle light and all their magnificence, should bring an impact on the people participating, in such a way that the beauty of the liturgy would attract them and bring them to a experience something of the great mystery of God. St. Clement used many traditional forms of popular religiosity of the Baroque age of the Church. For him, the faith should touch also on the human feelings and could not be reduced only rules of conduct which served only the good of the State.

In the area of social and public life, religion had to fulfill some practical function. Everything had to be submitted to the criterion of usefulness to the state which was administered in an absolute way. Also the Church, whose meaning was seen in a utilitarian way, had to promote the earthly happiness of man on the moral level. Authentic catholic life, to a great degree, was much weakened.³⁷

The clergy at this time were payed with money which came from the religious fund which the State administration controlled. Because of this, the priests identified themselves more with their public relationships and functions as “functionaries of the State”. Each priest had to fulfill numerous obligations, which often wore them out; they had not only religious functions, but also educational chores, assisting the poor and the sick, and other functions which were determined by the law of the government. And also the sermon had to have as its principal purpose the formation of good citizens. For this reason, there was much abuse in the pulpit, by giving instruction about economic, hygienic and police matters. Especially in the sense of being tolerant to all people, they could not speak about religious matters which could seriously offend any citizen.³⁸

³⁵ A. INNERKOFER, *Der hl. Klemens Maria Hofbauer als Prediger*, in: H. SWOBODA – H. KIRSCH, *Erster Homiletischer Kurs in Wien 1911. Vorträge und Verhandlungen*, Wien – Leipzig 1911, 120.

³⁶ R. DECOT, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer im politisch-geistigen Umfeld seiner Wiener Zeit*, in *SHCSR* 49 (2001) 25.

³⁷ A. FENZL, *Das pastorale Wirken Hofbauers in Wien*, op. cit., 78.

³⁸ A. INNERKOFER, *Der hl. Klemens Maria Hofbauer als Prediger*, op. cit., 118; K. FLEISCHMANN, *Klemens Maria Hofbauer. Sein Leben und seine Zeit*, op. cit., 33.

St. Clement responded to this challenge with a spiritual style of ministry which focused on the life of faith. He had no parish in Vienna; and because of this, he could function independently of the program which was established by the government offices. His main objective was to proclaim the Word of God according to the program of the Redemptorists; that is, to fulfill a goal which went beyond the perspective of this earthly life.

Fr. Hofbauer was for his contemporaries a model of authentic interior life. His strong faith, so strong as to move mountains, shone to an exceptional degree.³⁹ In his sermons and other forms of activity, he focused on communicating to the people his own personal religious experience. In his sermons and preaching, he spoke about God's love for us with such enthusiasm that he inflamed the hearts of his listeners; he felt that he could never speak sufficiently about God's love for us, and also recommended this to his listeners and penitents.⁴⁰ His preaching and all his pastoral activity was a great act of faith.⁴¹

CONCLUSION

In the beginning of his pontificate, St. John Paul II spoke to all the Catholic Church with these words: "Humankind is the pathway of the Church" (Redemptor hominis, no. 14). The concrete human person is the first and most important element of the context and historical situation for determining the space of pastoral discernment for the Pastors in the Church (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, no. 154). St. Clement shows priests how they should allow themselves to be inspired in their pastoral work for people and their social context. "The man, or human person", as a pastoral principal, permitted him, St. Clement, to interpret the priestly vocation in such a way that a "permanent parish mission" is derived the concept of popular missions; preachers are converted into educators and instructors in the faith; and a cold and rationalistic liturgical practice is converted into the celebration of a joyful and solemn worship experience.

The pastoral activity of St. Clement can convince us that it is something important to familiarize ourselves with the needs of people and understand well the concrete situation in which they are living. Without this element, it is very difficult to communicate to people the Gospel message in an efficacious manner. At times pastors use inadequate ideas, which are not adapted to the people they are dealing with; and because of this, their transmission of the Christian faith is not clear, and the truths of salvation by Jesus Christ lose their existential meaning for people. Only if the pastor knows well the people he is serving pastorally and

³⁹ MH XII, 25.

⁴⁰ MH XI, 151.

⁴¹ J. HEINZMANN, *Św. Klemens Maria Hofbauer – «Homo Apostolicus»*, in: *Św. Klemens Hofbauer: życie i dzieło. Materiały z Sympozjum Klementyńskiego w WSD Tuchów, 21-22 października 1986 r.*, Kraków 1987, 25.

identifies with them; can he exercise a positive influence on them, animate them; and take them to a new way of living.⁴²

In this Post-modern Age, people want to rewrite the history of humanity from the beginning. That which happened in the past, should be considered as meaningless and definitively forgotten. On the other hand, we should note that our post-modern time seems very much like the time of the Enlightenment. At times we speak of our age as one of a “New Enlightenment”. For this reason, we should conclude that the pastoral ministry of the 18th and 19th centuries, should give an important urging to today’s pastoral ministry; especially since today’s pastors deal with many challenges similar to those which confronted ST. Clement, two centuries ago. For this reason, we are completely justified in looking at the pastoral challenges of today in the perspective of history, and allow ourselves to be inspired pastorally by ST. Clement Hofbauer and his manner of responding to the challenges of his socio-cultural context.

⁴² T. RADCLIFFE, *The Sacramentality of the Word*, en: K. PECKLERS, *Liturgy in a Postmodern World*, London – New York 2003, 142