

## ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

### *The Eucharistic Priesthood in the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI*

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The research conducted in this paper focuses on the theological relationship of three expressions: the sacrament of Holy Orders, the apostolate of the laity, and the Eucharist. The immediate motive for undertaking this topic is the lack of monographs or studies in the theological literature that would combine the subject of the Catholic priesthood (ministerial and common) and the Blessed Sacrament in a scientifically systematized way.

The doctoral dissertation is of a source nature, which means that it focuses primarily on the theological analysis of the thought of one of the most eminent theologians XX and XXI centuries – Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI (1927-2022).

The main aim of the paper is to solve the following research problem: how, according to Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, the Catholic priesthood, i.e. the common priesthood, resulting from baptism and the ministerial priesthood, resulting from ordination, and the Eucharist interact with each other, and whether in the context of the theological approach to this relationship it is possible to speak of a new concept: Eucharistic priesthood?

The implementation of the research in the context of the set goal was possible thanks to the use of an appropriate methodology. The proper method, used throughout the work, can be described as systematic-personalistic. It consists of three methodological components: the positive method (which makes it possible to present a specific doctrine and teaching of the Magisterium), the historical-theological method (which demonstrates the organic development of a particular concept), and the speculative/systematic method (which consists in the critical juxtaposition and comparison of magisterial content and reflections of other theologians with the legacy of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI). The applied method allowed to effectively conduct research in each individual part of the work and to draw final conclusions.

The work consists of a list of abbreviations, an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and categorized bibliography. Each chapter and paragraph is preceded by a short introduction, while a brief summary is used at the end of each section.

In the first chapter, in particular, the research problem boils down to the question: to what extent can we speak about the concept of the "Eucharistic priesthood" and to what extent can the fact of its existence be justified on the basis of the theological thought of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI? In it, the author shows not only the genesis and source of the Catholic priesthood, but above all confirms the thesis that the priesthood of the ordained and the laity, developed doctrinally over the centuries, it can exist thanks to the real, substantial and true presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. An important thread in this part of the research is to demonstrate the significant differences and similarities that exist between the laity and the ordained, especially in the context of their communion celebration of the Eucharist.

In the second chapter, the main focus of the research was related to the research question: how, according to Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, does the Eucharist shape priestly existence? A special feature of this part of the work is the focus on the theology of the sacrament of Holy Orders, to which the German thinker devoted a lot of space in his reflections. On the basis of research sources, the author shows that the ontological identity, zealous generosity and deepened spirituality of priests and deacons are fundamentally connected with the Eucharistic mystery. The proper building of each of these spaces in the existence of the ordained is a real response to contemporary crises among the clergy. The Eucharistic dimension of the life of the Catholic clergy also results in a proper and fruitful pastoral ministry among the laity.

In the third chapter, the research question is answered: how does Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI connect the Eucharistic priesthood realized in the Church with the realization of the salvific mediation of Christ in his threefold function: Priest, Prophet and King? The research in this part of the work helps not only to defend the magisterial thesis that all members of the People of God truly realize the threefold mission of Christ, but also, on the basis of research sources, to draw the conclusion that the proper realization of the priestly, prophetic and royal mission by the laity and the ordained is possible only through their source in the Eucharist. The real effects of the theological correlation between these spaces are: 1) a greater liturgical awareness; 2) a clear testimony of living faith;

3) active love for all people. Research shows that the Eucharistic priesthood of the laity and ordained has its most important tasks for the Church and the world.

The fourth chapter answers the research question: according to Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, how does the Eucharistic priesthood of the individual faithful and ordained in the hierarchical order affect the communion unity of the Church? Research based on the sources of the German thinker allows us to derive some specific theological theses. The first concerns the communion bonds of the bishops, who, together with their head, the Bishop of Rome, must be an authentic image of unity and mutual cooperation. The bonds of communion should be similar at the level of the particular Churches: the Bishop, together with the priests and deacons, as the source texts of the German thinker confirm, must strive with all possible zeal for unity and respect in mutual relations, which translate into obviously on the functioning of all the other, smaller parts of the Church. The German theologian's contribution to reflections on relations within Catholic parishes is significant: the healthy relationship of pastors and laity to each other is the basis of all fruitful and good cooperation at virtually every level. The source data leave no doubt that the functioning of all the above-mentioned bonds between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood is possible only on the basis of the sacrament of perfect unity, the Eucharist.

At the end, the author of the dissertation draws the final conclusions, which are a comprehensive look at the results of the conducted research. The most important element of this part of the work is a detailed explanation of the concept of the Eucharistic priesthood and the demonstration of its Christocentric, doctrinal, ecclesial, communion and pastoral dimensions. The final results of the research are also a clear encouragement for further research and allow us to broaden the meaning of the concept of the Eucharistic priesthood.

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