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Teologiczne znaczenie posługi lektora i akolity w życiu Kościoła w świetle
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oraz przyjęcia kandydatów do diakonatu i presbiteratu”.

Summary

The thesis, *The Theological Significance of the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte in the Life of the Church in Light of the "Rites of Institution of Lectors and Acolytes and the Admission of Candidates to the Diaconate and Presbyterate"*, explores the significance of the ministries of lector and acolyte for the life of the Church.

The primary source for this study is the rite for institution of lectors and acolytes, as well as *Ministeria Quaedam*, the *Motu proprio* of Pope Paul VI. These documents were published in the liturgical book referenced in the title of the thesis: *Rites of Institution of Lectors and Acolytes and the Admission of Candidates to the Diaconate and Presbyterate*. This book was published in Katowice in 2014.

The first chapter of the thesis presents the background in which the need for reforming the ministries of lector and acolyte arose. These ministries are closely linked to the Word of Lord and the Eucharist. Therefore, it is essential to recognize how, through the work of the Second Vatican Council, the Word of Lord was once again acknowledged as the source of Christ's presence and of the life of the Church. The perception of these ministries also changed (the thesis outlines the evolution in history).

Being described in ancient records, lector (reader) and acolyte ministries gradually became steps toward ordination. In the pre-Vatican II Council period, they were referred to as "minor orders." There arose a need to properly define what lectorate and acolyte institutions truly are. In *Ministeria Quaedam*, Pope Paul VI instructed that lectorate and acolyte ministry should no longer be called "minor orders" but rather ministries. They ceased to be mere steps toward ordination and became ministries of the People of God, who, by virtue of baptism and their participation in the liturgy, can fulfill these functions. Their fulfillment is of a permanent nature, becoming a lifelong vocation rather than merely tasks carried out in a more or less occasional manner.

Commitment to the ministries of lector and acolyte stems from baptismal priesthood of all believers. It is baptism that makes us "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a God's special possession" (1 Peter 2, 9). Christ, anointed as priest, king, and prophet, shares His messianic dignity with all whom He makes children of God. Through baptism, we receive the likeness to our Lord and His grace to participate in His priestly, prophetic, and royal mission. The second chapter of the thesis, in considering the ministry of lector and acolyte,

highlights participation of believers in the priesthood of Christ, as well as how Scripture describes the dignity of priest, prophet, and king, and how we can fulfill this dignity in contemporary conditions.

After presenting the fundamental aspects of the ministries of lector and acolyte, the next chapter of the thesis discusses specific responsibilities of the functions during the liturgy as well as their identity resulting from their vocation. They are ministers of the Word of Lord and the Eucharist. They are given the privilege of drawing from the very source of the Church's life—the Word of Lord and the Eucharist. At the same time, as ministers, instituted lectors and acolytes fulfill the essential mission of the Church: to proclaim the Word of God and to administer the sacraments. In the broadest sense, the role of lectors and acolytes is to assist the People of God in receiving the Word of Lord and participating in the liturgy, as well as to support priests and deacons in the celebration of the Eucharist, and in further, to engage in catechetical and charity activities. The thesis analyzes the rites of institution of lectors and acolytes, as well as the biblical and euchological texts read during these rites, as those texts uncover the meaning and dignity of ministries of lector and acolyte.

The final chapter reflects on the preparation of lectors and acolytes for committing to and fulfilling their ministry. An awareness of how great is the vocation of lector and acolyte, urges both initial formation as well as continuous ongoing development. Fulfilling duties of acolyte or lector is possible only after meeting certain requirements, such as a specific age and adequate spiritual and intellectual preparation. Initial and permanent formations aim to ensure proper preparation and faithful commitment in undertaking the many responsibilities allocated to lectors and acolytes.

The vocation of lector and acolyte, and the tasks they perform, are not introduced merely to address the shortage of ordained ministers, though the presence of lectors and acolytes is indeed a great support for the clergy. The lector and acolyte fulfill their ministry by carrying out tasks that are uniquely theirs and should not be performed by others in their place. What they do is their mission—it becomes their way of life. As laymen, they have a unique opportunity to evangelize through the witness of their lives. They can reach places and people who, for various reasons, may be inaccessible to the clergy. By fulfilling their daily responsibilities, such as raising children and engaging in professional work, lectors and acolytes contribute to spreading God's will and His Kingdom on earth. Lectors and acolytes are not merely individuals assisting in parish liturgical functions; rather, they are, above all, those who proclaim our Savior through their daily lives, becoming instruments of His love.