

## DEMOCRACY, DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE CHURCH

If we want to ask modern questions of democracy and democratization of our post-communist society, which includes the Church, we must first understand and clarify the very meaning of these words. It is difficult to evaluate today whether 21 years ago we cared for democracy of our Czechoslovak civil society, or we cared for its democratization. While the word democracy is according to the dictionary of foreign words „the principle of equal application of the will of all members of any group”, democratization means „editing, organizing something according to democratic principles”.

The famous French Jesuit Paul Valadier reminds how important it is to realize what the term democracy describes today. According to him today democracy reflects not only a form of social society (by A. de Tocqueville) taken as a whole social relations influencing policy, but also a social system whose individualistic principle is progressively extended to interpersonal relationships. At the same time he understands it politologically, as the institutional political system in which representative government – the executive power of the people is controlled by the judiciary. The concept of democracy may represent some „culture” of respect for the rules of democracy, based on the recognition of democratic principles and values based on human rights.

Already in the 40's of the 20th century Sartori noticed that we like democracy as a political system even though we do not exactly know what in fact it really means. Vitebsk's bishop Wladyslaw Blin points out that even though it has already passed more than half a century since the fall of socialism, even today we live in an era of confusion concerning the term democracy. The very term „demos” from which the concept of democracy derives, raises a number of uncertainties. For example, Blin called the problem of definition of people (demos) an unsolvable problem for democracy itself. However, as Sartori adds that the modern age definition of democracy is based primarily on the traditional interpretation of human rights, particularly freedom and equality.

The way to democracy and especially to its application in the Church, began to show the Church's social doctrine of the popes in 19th century. Leo XIII. is the first promoter of the liberal democratic views. Despite the fact that this great Pope critically thinks about it, he still rejects (after the Church's experience with the French Revolution of 1789) any form of Jacobin democracy. However, it is noteworthy that at the same time he disavows himself from the forms of statal monarchy which was accepted and preferred by the Church after gaining the freedom.

But Pope Leo XIII. in the encyclical *Libertas praestantissimum* of 1888 introduces the model of „healthy democracy” drawn up already by st. Thomas Aquinas. According to him, the Church in that time had already been prepared to accept the validity, independence and sovereignty of any state, regardless of the state form, structure and its own political system policy if this state would serve the common good and would protect freedom and human dignity.

Rejection of any state omnipotence and totalitarianism, which are incompatible with freedom and human dignity, is particularly seen in *Quadragesimo anno* Encyclical of Pope Pius XI. from 1931. His definition of the subsidiarity principle gave the basis for the construction of democracy in the Church. The principle of subsidiarity in accordance with human dignity, sense of solidarity and sense of responsibility, advocates the entitlement of every human being without distinction on his human rights, and protects him against State omnipotence. Complete recognition of democracy by Catholic Church was for the first time realised at Christmas discourse called *Benignitas* by Pope Pius XII. He was talking about a real „democracy” in which the World War II and moral quality of the representatives of people played the important role at that time, because the fundamental political decisions in a democratic state would depend on them.

With the Vatican Council II Church began to use other tools for better access to civil democracy. Article 75 of *Gaudium et Spes* represents all previous efforts to find the concept of democracy appropriate to the Christian faith. We find here such elements as the sovereignty of the people, equality before the law, separation of powers, the need for political parties, respect for diversity of views (pluralism), suspicion of danger of very high concentration of governmental power and so on. Contemporarily there are also mentioned the Catholic emphases: the moral base of the natural moral law, the principle of subsidiarity, the common good, active participation, civil education, political courage and charity – charity. Also, a young theologian Ratzinger underlines that the very concept of democracy, should also include a significant religious heritage, making it also the task for the Church. Among the main points of possible democratizing efforts he includes: fraternity, functional understanding of authority, charisma, collegiality, synodality, people of God. Nevertheless, Ratzinger emphasizes that public, social and political explosiveness of the Gospel, will not operate by prescribed Synodal’s form, but as a liberal vocation that unifies the faithful and liberates to their own initiative.

One of the important statements on democracy as the political system of the Church after social encyclicals of Leo XIII. and his followers were reflections of John Paul II., who himself experienced several totalitarian regimes and clearly knew that dictatorships are always associated with abuse of power and violence (actual and structural) and a citizen here is not a subject of social life, but the object of manipulation usurping the power. He refers principally to the fact that this system contributes to contempt of human dignity and human rights violations. In the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* John Paul II. believes that democracy can contribute to developing the

whole person and all people, but later in the encyclical *Centesimus annus* 46 adds that the principle of majority without moral spirit does not guarantee to establish a fair state forms. Majority rule in a democracy must always protect the minority or underprivileged groups, and must respect the moral approaches that guarantee fair state in the form. Only then it is possible to create a successful „welfare state”. At this point there is a place for useful social doctrine of the Church, the independent Church, that is not afraid to pick up its voice in prophetic criticism if it deems it necessary. Popes clearly criticized the lack of references to the absolute and universally valid values in democratic ideals, because a person is dependent on the moral and natural law. They protest against the understanding of democracy, which should serve only as a method or technique for creating political order, without any connection to the irreplaceable values (such as. Freedom or human dignity) that exceed a human. Democracy, which is not based on the morality of its citizens and their beliefs in faith, in freedom, in conscience, in human person ever, can lead, as well as Ratzinger says, to tyranny (especially if the state wants to become perfect at any cost).

Many people, however, not only younger, raised up by new media time, are increasingly asking questions about possible involvement in the process of democratization of the Church today. At the same time however many voices echo because of the current unpreparedness of the Church, especially in communication with the faithful, or the society. If we do not want to repeat the resignation of the Western European church as it was in the 80's during the last century, when at least half of its members resigned due to the very weak social dialogue, it would be useful to think about the sense of sharing, dialogue, power and authority in this one of the oldest companies in the world. Church is not a freshman in this, even though it seems so at first sight, but it has a very long way to acceptance of democracy as a system, but also as a method of communication.

The democratic element called *dialogue*, by whose the leading shepherds would orientate themselves in society together with knowing all the information about the joys and pains, to develop self-confidence of faith in today's society, it says even current Pope Benedict XVI. Even as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, in his reflections about connecting to Europe, he says that who fights for Europe, fights for democracy (but associated to eumonia).

Even Pope Paul VI. tries to dismantle the role of the Church, and also his, based on democratization, thus on some form of dialogue. In the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* writes: „Dialogue is evangelisation ... „The Church must carry out a dialogue with the world around them. Church becomes a word, becomes a message, it becomes a conversation.” Pope Paul VI. sees transcendental origin of dialogue in God's intentions. There is recognition that the development of dialogue leads us to deepen our knowledge, renovation of our expressions, to discovering elements of truth in the opinions of the others and makes us wise teacher.” Paul VI. sees also dangers in making dialogue, particularly he highlights the importance of truth: „Only he who lives in the fullness of Christian vocation, may be resistant to infection by errors, which he comes into contact

with.” Despite this beneficial advice to dialogue in the Church, he exclusively combines dialogue with obedience.

By the occasion of finding answers to the question of democratization in the Church, we mustn't forget the concepts of power, authority and their use because one of the approaches to address to the Church is its understanding of power. One of the authors who were concerned with the issue of church authority and the appropriate dealing with it is prof. Karl Gabriel. He looks for the sociological answer looking at the phenomenon of a long tradition of ecclesiastical power. Unlike Weber and Foucault, with their dominant enforcement power that lies in picking their own will by force, Gabriel finds a theory of H. Arendt, which is based on mutual consent and authorization of the members of some social society. To this theory it is not sufficient a model focused on commands and obedience, because this concept is based on such an authority, which is suitable for the Church too. At the same time there is getting to know about the importance of power in the Church: „Church without the authority would become a church that ceases to exist as a social group”. As long as the Church there will be some groups on global levels and through their common action at the level of dioceses, parishes, and even within specific groups according parishes, they will protect the power that will always stay „in their effective social existence, dependent on the consent Members of the group”. According to Gabriel, even bishops, as formal bearers of power in their bishopric are able to exercise this power only if they find people of consent in the church. In this context, however, as well as for the Pope, for bishops also raises the problem of how to achieve the acceptance of the acquired power by ecclesial community, without resorting only to the formal authorization of the formal impact from above. For us the essential question is how to keep functioning of this common religious community, thus how to keep it in dialogue. In the future, there is another, hardly seizable same phenomenon of power vacuum in the Church. It may be caused due to the fact that except the mutual consent of the members of this church group, there does not arise any new formation of power in the Church. This points out that the Church of modern times has completely focused solely on „authority, as an undeniable recognition of” its right to obedience.

Arendt sought for power confirmed by people, she wanted to avoid the means of violence, which she considers one of the typical responses to the loss of power. And also Gabriel supports this thesis, saying where the recognition and support is missing, there forms of power gain significance there, in Foucault's terms – and this referred to the Church, as well as to the society too.

Another author who vehemently undertook a reform of the Church according to the theory of H. Arendt, was a Canadian theologian Robert Mager. Mager fights for more space for laics in the Church, especially when participation in decision-making. He respectfully describes Arendt's view to highlight freedom in policy and governance. At the same time he reveals the same logic of the private sector for the Church. Thus, on the one hand, there is an attempt for a public dialogue with the world, even attempt to leadership or the right alignment of the world and on the other hand, the language

and logic of family and fraternity that on the contrary belong to the private sector. Mager emphasizes that exactly this model of fraternity shows religion's disaffection to the world. Citing L. Boffa, Mager says that the Church on the way to maintain its power demands on the private logic, on which basis Church wants to establish a real public dimension of its power. Church keeps under control the aspiration for equality and decision-making according to the document *Christifideles laici*. Thus, what is essential in the practice of power in the Church, is the status of equality in the Church, according to Mager.. Simultaneously this equality exceeding the opposition clergy-laity, allows to find freedom for Christians, and this freedom must be actively manifested and used by them. The whole effort of the Church, the whole „politics” in the Church (democratization, *sensus fidelium*, changes of ordinand's services, freedom of speech, etc..) is living space, which is based on the equality of believers and focused on fulfilling in freedom.

Here, however, it is worth realizing that the thing is not about the fact that the Church should be showing up and giving itself to the world through the Spirit in order to gain the power. Not at all. Showing the Church to the world is constructive dimension of God's action who takes upon himself humanity in Jesus Christ, for to seize the profane dimension through the Holy Spirit and make history. Therefore the Church is involved in the dynamics of giving up its ownership of God, of truth and of the future in favour of searching for God in the world, just because this is its part of heritage, its *kléros*, where implementing the power. In this sense, the power in the Church doesn't have any political and practical sense. Power in the Church in this sense, is just as some method that helps people (assembly, community) to seek God in the world.

Another „democratic” element that belongs to the tradition of modern authentic theological sources of God's appearance is also agreement (*Consensus Fidelium* LG 12) of God's people with the Church. In this case it concerns the possession of theological belief and the gift of God. This belief from its very nature requires a deep agreement of heart and spirit with the Church. This means that God's people are unmistakably connecting to faith under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church (UCC) through the supernatural sense of faith (*sensus fidei*). It is a matter of feeling of all the people, from the bishops to the It is a feeling all the people from the bishops to the „last” laic faithful.

The above-mentioned dialogue between the Church and the world, can better help to illustrate the concept of Church as sacrament. Mager finds the concrete form of public space in the Church in three points: the first is (in Arendt's theory) to maintain tension in the Church between those who depend on public and what should remain private. In the second point he refers to the need, even in the Church, to strictly distinguish the authority from the power, and to encourage appropriate tension between them. The last point according to Magera is promotion and return to pluralism in the Church, which are understood to meet equality and diversity, by whose the social equality of all its members (regardless of gender, character, race, etc.) gains ground.

In conclusion, Mager proposes the establishment of new church structures based on two principles – synodality and subsidiarity. In the tracks of Arendt, he is in favour of the establishment of religious order, which must cooperate in order to balance the accumulated power between community people and the authority of holy services in the Church. In order to find an answer to this vision, Mager recommends to try to go the way of psychology, but his whole idea seems very ideal, and still waiting for its examination in practice.

Let us reflect also about the after-conciliar thoughts of U.S. bible specialist P. John L. McKenzie, SJ. McKenzie argues that although it is natural to understand the power of the Church as a kind of power at all, in the light of the New Testament this understanding of ecclesiastical is seen false. Also the line between the implementation of power and tyranny is extremely tight and it can be determined only after an exact definition of the strength (power). Therefore, McKenzie cites the famous American theologian John M. Todd, who claims that the power supporting the dual evolution is the only legitimate human power. In this sense, the exchange of existence, of owned items and services for the benefit of everyone are indispensable for the evolution of individual and common life. Any power that claims the right to exceed this condition is tyranny, anarchy and establishes the personal and common life on lies and nonsense. Moreover, the interaction between them ceases to be human.

Also the view of K. Rahner confirms that the dominating power doesn't belong to the Church, because its goal is to bring their subordinates into the status of spiritual maturity, by which they wouldn't be liable anymore. McKenzie emphasizes that the Church is a liberal community, whose members we become freely, therefore it is not a case of natural state community, whose power is based on an agreement of its members. But the Church is fundamentally different from other communities in its objectives and means, which are specifically targeted to the Church. This power in the Church, even though it is actually still understood in profane or statal terms, must therefore not be assimilated with the state. If so, only analogically.

Although the concept of power and other elements of the internal structure of the Church is not statal, it is still under the influence of culture, nation and state, in which the Church exists and fulfills its mission. Regardless of where does it exist the Church must still avoid two dangers – an escape from culture (the world) and profanisation (secularization).

Magisterium of the Church is not authorised to tell people what to do, but to enable them to find a solution. McKenzie continues with the view that the competence of power in the Church (faith and morals) and its mission is, according to the New Testament, proclamation of the Gospel and giving the sacraments. The Church is not competent to control the field of science and morality. If the power (mightiness) is penetrated with its objective, the mission of the Church will be unique and complete content.

Therefore, the last and the most real justification of the power, as pointed out by McKenzie, is just freedom. The power is freedom and in this meaning it is also the force.

Power can not survive if it does not protect the freedom of leaders and subordinates. If power does not accept the freedom, it will be forced to defend the position which it was not entitled to take. But if the power recognizes the freedom of the subordinates it will ensure its own freedom, it will strengthen a confidence which comes from the voluntary consent of the subordinates and their power will join the power of those who will be governing. Consequently, power and freedom are the kind of power.

Relations between power and freedom are determined by love for the Christian community. Love does not restrict freedom, and it is the fullness of it. Christian in the Church does not act under duress or command, or obligation, but because of the fact that the power of the Spirit is the motor of acting in him. At the same time nobody is able to lead somebody if he is not accepted by subordinates. This acceptance is a voluntary act of consent, which can not be forced, because the leader has to earn acceptance.

Also the public opinion has its place when exercising power, because one does not fight against the decision in case he participated in the acceptance of it. Therefore the public discussion is always healthier than private (the private one is often disposed to injustice, wrong language, as well as to a sharp and unsubstantiated claims). In McKenzie's words, the real change in the Church will be when the Church recognizes the right and power that belong to believers because of the constitution of the Church, and not because of the generosity of the Pontifical. The Church has to remain secret too, although not everything can be regarded secret and understood secret. Secrets of ecclesiastical power lie in the fact that it concerns a power whose strength is the power of love. If the religious institution uses different power from the power of love, it ceases to have Christian and religious character. McKenzie concludes that the order and discipline do not say anything about the fulfillment of the Church's mission. Recognition of faith as the real basis of ecclesiastical power is, according to him, the only guarantee against the decline of Church's power, which may cause profanization and transformation of the power into the structured power. Just as the faith is necessary for the acceptance of authority, it is also necessary for its implementation. Public opinion in the Church is one of the channels by which the Spirit speaks. Power is the limb of the body, and if it is to achieve the fullness that appertains to it, it needs the fullness of the body to fulfill every man by Jesus.

Znoj (according to the book *The Future of Democracy* by Norbert Bobbi) points out the many defections of democracy. Firstly he remarks on a democratic society, „an eccentric society” where the not free and autonomous individuals determine the stream of politics, but different groups or classes where the individual becomes just one of the articles of their helpless chain do so. An elected representative in parliament representing the whole society becomes only party member, advocating for some group. Democracy is unable to end the oligarchic power. That is to say political elites also in democracy get the problem of how to maintain the power under control, even after exchange in government for certain time. Neither so called invisible power is liable to the public in democracy. Real democracy is bureaucratic. Moreover, instead of developing

education and cultivating people, real democracy faces the indifference, consumerism and indifference to politics.

Also Ratzinger points out the defections of democracy. To the forefront he puts especially the today's inability of democracy to come to terms with the imperfections of human concerns in so-called „free communities“. Because the good doesn't consist in an ethical human effort in his positive use of freedom, but it is predetermined through the structure easily and without the possibility of the opposition. Therefore the „free community“ must be independent from ethos. Morality in such a society becomes unnecessary, even unwise. This view is supported by the belief that this earthly life is the only one (the loss of transcendence). After all, Marx has taught that a man must refuse transcendence, for to be finally released from false reassurance and to build a perfect world.

Ratzinger responds to these views with the book by St. Augustine – City of God where he looks for the answer to those who consider Christianity in politics anarchy. Christianity as a political force has elements critically seen according to him. The first is Messianic dynamism of Christianity, which is focused on the unconditional nature of „empire“ through which the citizen must not avoid the country intentionally, and neither fight against it at all (some New Testament letters). Secondly, the catholic theology has come to the recognition of the profane, messianistic state by denying righteousness just from acts and criterion of holiness only from grace and by acceptance of Aristotle and his idea of natural moral law. Thirdly, the Christian faith rejected the classical idea of tolerance, because they did not want to recognize the gods of the Pantheon. Therefore Christianity from the beginning despite having a small number of believers has exercised its right to public space and has taken the stand on the legal state level. It is right here where its greatness lies as the antipole of each statal totalitarianism. Regarding this Ratzinger affirms that right in the political sphere christianity avoided messianism and inclines to rationality and ethos also by the fact that although the New Testament knows the political ethos, there is no political theology!

To support the sense of dialogue in a democracy, we can add that despite the grim vision of the unfinished work in a secret study of German army speaking about the exhaustion of economic resources causing the downfall of democracy as such, we present a view of the famous German philosopher Habermas, who says that the paradigm of democracy for the politics (in sense of practice of self-determination) is not the market, but exactly the dialogue. The sense of this dialogue should be general consensus and searching for real solutions. One of the most important Dominican biblicist recently, who is very interested in democracy in the world, Benedict Thomas Viviano, is aware of the constant threat to humans, which comes from original sin, which in this case gives rise to the abuse of power. Yet he is also convinced that modern democratic systems are the best way to limit this abuse of power. Viviano therefore considered necessary to create a theology of democracy.



Viviano reminds that democracy is not a magic cure for all the pain of the world, and moreover, it has many defections. He shows, that while on one hand, Churchill considered democracy the worst form of government, with the exception of the other alternatives, on the other hand R. Niebuhr argues that „democracy is a method of finding appropriate solutions to irresolvable problems”. To Viviani that all these things conduct to the fact, that a good responsible and stable democracy must be dependent on relations of trust, reciprocity and cooperation. Humble and courageous realism of the Gospel should be a good guide in that. Young Ratzinger himself, in one reflection to Hans Mayer, says that although the Church mustn't change into party democracy, it must take over the one of the essential elements of modern democracy, i. e. the independent custody of rights. Ratzinger defends democracy in the Church following the classical model of parish-presbyterate-episcopate, in which the Church has rich experience. In the new valuation of his article 30 years later in 2001, he emphasizes (already as a curial cardinal) that, as in 1968, the word democracy was a cure for everything, today there is a threat, that certain procedural part of it would select only the principle of dictatorship of the majority. Consequently, he underlines, that the fundamental human rights must never be the subject of democratic voting of majority!

Ratzinger's democracy definition speaks about the system, which is shown in the reciprocal limitation and carrying the freedom, which regards the protection of the rights and dignity of the individual, but simultaneously it also enables the cooperation of all who serve the common good (as from material as from formal point of view). Who speaks about the democratization of the Church today, the pope reminds, cannot remember only the principle of majority, but also the multifaceted image of democracy, in which looking for analogies and common points. Individual tools such as shared freedom or neutral law, must serve the common goal to protect and thus require a good as for the group as for the individual. Good of the Church seen by God is the Gospel and faith is seen by people. The aim of the church constitution and law order has to be the fact, that the faith is given to all people as a genuine light and power, from which we live. Ratzinger names democratic mechanisms this way: a control of power through law, inviolability of law by power and standardization of law through ethos.

With Maritain we can underline that the limitation of democracy only to its procedural part, would conduct to excluding the citizen from the political scene. Thus Maritain classes the democratic pluralism among the elements characterizing democracy, even he recommends to teach democratic pluralism at schools. Maritain citing Bergson, that „democracy is the essence of the Gospel and love is its engine” judges, that democracy can enforce only with citizens armed with strong moral and religious beliefs.”

Valadier despite recognizing the existence of democratic elements, which are incompatible with the nature of the Catholic Church, confirms that there are some democratic elements, which are perfectly compatible with the Church's ones.

Democratic regime as such is not compatible with the Church, because the Church is not based on free discussion of the indetermined community, but on the founding speech of Christ and is generally structured and legitimate as long as this Word expands and Church remains faithful to it. The Church is not political community, but the community of grace and salvation. Christ entrusted the mission of mercy and love for all human beings until the end of times. Therefore its structure must be showing this message and realizing the way of how it was set up.

Valadier is convinced that the only by loyalty to its constitutive elements the Church can better respond to the democratic aspirations of the faithful. Therefore certainly not imitate or import the democratic regime in its entirety, but will appreciate the essential and necessary elements that create the credibility and viability of the Church.

Valadier also proposes (according to the model of democracy) more control activities in the work of the Church, even though no one doubts that the Church is a real law community. Yet he wants law to protect the rights of believers, especially in a moment of abusing the power in the Church. At the same time it concerns also protecting the religious freedom and human rights. Ratzinger concludes that despite the searching for the other models of democracy today, only democratic pluralism based on Greek and Christian heritage is able to survive. State in order to survive must recognize the right to faith in public space and also must not restrict religious tolerance by state. This belief, however, must be guided by the strength of public belief of Christian truth. Christian values have significantly contributed to consolidate democratic state. State must recognize that there is existence of truth, which can not be subordinated to consensus, which is being enabled and preceded by this *being*. According to him, democracy is available where the conscience and responsibility is available.

The aim of this study was firstly to remove fear from the combination of the concepts of democracy and the Church and on the other hand, to raise real interest of the members of this mystical body of Christ. Perhaps, in 21st century we will be able to renew so much needed dialogue that on one side develops evangelization (but not moralistic) following the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* and at the same time it remains open to all whom the Spirit of Church guide on their way of faith; and on the other side, a dialogue from which many the others, or fellow human beings standing outside could utilize and co-create our special community (assembly) called the Church.

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