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## Pastoral work in the service of the Kingdom of God - Blessed priest Emilian Kovch (1884-1944)

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PASTORAL WORK IN THE SERVICE OF THE  
KINGDOM OF GOD –  
BLESSED PRIEST EMILIAN KOVCH (1884–1944)

- Słowa kluczowe:** ks. Emilian Kowcz, Królestwo Boże, duszpasterstwo, parafia, martyria, liturgia, diakonia, koinonia, męczeństwo
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Emilian Kovch<sup>1</sup> was a pastor of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church during the complicated inter-war period, which was characterized by frequent changes in the occupational regimes, each of which in its own turn hindered clergy

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<sup>1</sup> Blessed Emilian Kovch was born on August 20, 1884 in the village of Kosmach (Kosiv district), where his father Hryhoriy, was the pastor. As a child, he was very talented, and his father cared that he would study philosophy and theology in Rome in the Urbanian University (1905–1911), after which he married (October 24, 1910) and was ordained a priest in 1911. At first he ministered in the parish in Pidvolochys'k (Skalat district) and then in 1912 volunteered for missionary work among the Ukrainian Catholics in Yugoslavia. In 1916 he returned to Galicia and became an assistant-pastor in Sernyky Horishni (Rohatyn district). From 1919 he becomes the chaplain of the Ukrainian Galician Army. In 1921 he became pastor in Borshchiv (Peremysliany district), and about a year later – in the town of Peremysliany and the nearby village of Korosno, performing his pastoral service here until his arrest. For administering the Sacrament of baptism to Jews persecuted by the Nazis and active pastoral work among them, on December 30, 1942 he was arrested and taken to the prison in Lviv on the Lontskoho street and then in August 1943 he was transferred to the concentration camp „Majdanek”, near Lublin. In February 1944, Fr. Emilian fell seriously ill and was sent to the camp hospital. He most likely died on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1944, and the body of probably burned in the crematorium. In 1999, Fr. Kovch was posthumously awarded the title of „Righteous man of Ukraine” by the Jewish community. June 27, 2001, Pope John Paul II, during his official visit to Ukraine declared Fr. E. Kovch Blessed along with the other Ukrainian martyrs. On April 15, 2011 the first annual youth pilgrimage honoring heroic acts of Fr. E. Kovch took place to the museum „Majdanek” in Lublin. On May 1, 2012 in Peremysliany a monument to Blessed E. Kovch was erected. He was proclaimed the patron of pastors in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (В. Гриб, *Душпастирське служіння блаженного священномученика Еміліяна Ковча в період 1911–1944 рр.*, Львів 2013 (manuscript), p. 18–28, 111–135; К. Лабінська, *Дивен Бог у святих Своїх*, Львів 2001, p. 14–20).

in their pastoral work with the faithful. At this short period of time in Galicia, during which the government changed three times; Fr. Emilian working in these extreme conditions, was able to carefully and zealously carry out his pastoral ministry<sup>2</sup>. However, the most specific form of pastoral work which engaged this priest was his spiritual guidance of prisoners, first in Lviv prison and later in the Nazi concentration camp „Majdanek”, located on the outskirts of Lublin. The proof of his pastoral care in the prison, based on his courageous witness of his faith until the moment of his martyr's death, was the characterization of Fr. Emilian as „the pastor of Majdanek”<sup>3</sup>.

According to the specific circumstances of the pastoral work of Fr. E. Kovch, through which he realized all four directions of service of the Church for the Kingdom of God – martyrria, leiturgia, diakonia and koinonia<sup>4</sup> – can be divided into two periods: the pastorship in the parish (1911–1942) and pastoral work in extreme conditions – in prison (1942–1944). It should be noted that there is little evidence of his pastoral work in the prison environment<sup>5</sup>, which lasted less than two years. However, from eyewitness accounts it becomes evident that he voluntarily chose this particularly dangerous ministry, begging his relatives not to do anything for his liberation. In his letters Fr. Kovch affirmed that he felt happy in the concentration camp, since he considered it his duty to be with the most abandoned and those who suffered the most<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Р. Кіщелюк, *Душпастирська діяльність блаженного о. Е. Ковча*, Львів-Рудно 2004 (manuscript), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Х. Сніжна, *Блаженний Отець Еміліян Ковч. Парох Майданека*, Львів 2008, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> The Church carries out its mission in the world through the four pastoral functions that foresee: intensive activity in spreading the word and testimony of faith (martyria), zealot ritual and sacramental ministering (liturgia), compassionate ministry for the good of the community as a whole and each of its members in their particular need (diakonia), and the formation of a brotherly environment, unity and dynamic aspirations of the whole community to missionary life in God (koinonia). The goal of this well rounded service is to „declaration of the approach of the kingdom of God, in which people are able to truly feel it and contribute to its expansion in the world” (R. Hajduk, *Czynić prawdę. Elementy teologii pastoralnej fundamentalnej*, Olsztyn 2010, p. 40).

<sup>5</sup> М. Луцький, О. Е. Ковч був моїм сусідом... Свідчення про небуденного приятеля у буденній праці, in: А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., p. 127–128.

<sup>6</sup> In a letter to his family Fr. Kovch wrote: „I understand that you are trying to free me. But I ask you not to do anything. Yesterday 50 people were killed here. If I am not here, who help them come through these sufferings? They would have gone into eternity with all of their sins and in deep despondency which lead to hell. Now they are going to die with heads raised up, leaving their sins behind them. And so they cross the bridge of eternity [...]. Except for heaven this is the only place where I would want to be. Here we are all equal: Polish, Jews, Ukrainian, Russians, Latvians, Estonians. From all those present I am the only priest. I can not even imagine what it would be like here without me” [...] (*Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, Архів Постуляційного Центру УГКЦ (manuscript), p. 3).

## 1. Martyria – ministry of preaching

Preaching the Word of God was one of the key tools in the ministry of Fr. Kovch, for evangelization of people. The sermons of Fr. Emilian were meaningful, relevant, and tailored to each listener<sup>7</sup>, because often he used metaphors and stories so pointedly that later parishioners long remembered, embodied, and even included the current language phrases which they had heard on the pulpit. Once Fr. Kovch preached in the village of Univ (near Peremyshliany), about the need for healthy patriotism and the necessity to show your dignity on your own soil in relation to the occupiers. He built his speech on a parable he created himself about „farmer Ivan”, who through his indecisiveness and compliance, resembled the behavior of some of his parishioners<sup>8</sup>.

Preaching helped Fr. Kovch care about the high level of Christian morality in the community of the faithful. He often sharply criticized various cases of immoral behavior from the pulpit, despite everything happening in this difficult war time. There is mention of one particularly „educational” sermon from the pulpit, which Fr. Emilian gave after he learned of how his parishioners in the village Korosno had robbed the newly arrived troops. In the homily, Fr. Kovch ordered them to return all the loot. This act of the pastor sharply increased its credibility, as well the number of active parishioners and supporters in the neighborhood, in addition it also a chance for practical evangelism in the hard war times<sup>9</sup>.

Fr. Emilian Kovch not only expertly preached on his own parish, but often visited surrounding rural communities and gave sermons there, especially on the occasion of celebrating the church feast day. For example, an eyewitness account survived from an employee of the Peremyshliany church – Mykhaylo Pryshliak, who says that in his native village of Tuchne, Fr. Emilian was often their „feast day” preacher. Lay people liked to listen to the ardent sermons of Fr. Kovch, and because of this nearby villagers often gathered together to hear the famous preacher from Peremyshliany. During such celebrations Fr. Emilian often touched on subjects such as: the necessity of faith in the Lord, love and respect for God, the need to preserve your own religious traditions, and also

<sup>7</sup> М. ШКІЛЬНИК, *Апостольський відвагою і євангельський вірністю*, in: А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ред.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>8</sup> One day Farmer Ivan invited guests to his home. Very many people arrived, both those invited and uninvited, and they began to crowd out the owner with saying: „Ivan, move!”. The submissive nature of this man and his modest demeanor led to the fact that before he knew it he was outside of his own house. The sermon was so well absorbed by audience that in certain circumstances where one should defend their right to patriotism and stop groveling before the invaders, they called to one another: „Stop being Ivan!” (А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., p. 30–31).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31–32.

stressed the importance of honest patriotism. Highlighting these and similar topics on the pulpit, Fr. Kovch often, for better absorption, used humorous sayings and spoke with enthusiasm, as he had set as his main task – to promote the unity of the people around the basic principles of the Christian faith<sup>10</sup>.

Pastoral care through preaching was particularly intense for Fr. Emilian during the first period of Soviet occupation (1939–1941). Immediately after the conquest of the Western Ukraine, the Soviet troops launched a series of anti-religious actions, combining them with mass arrests and deporting people to Siberia. Fr. Kovch with the aid of the words he boldly preached stood on the side of truth<sup>11</sup>. He set himself the task to strengthen the faith of his parishioners and dispel their fear<sup>12</sup>, „uttered these fearless sermons, so that even those who have never come into the church, became vigilant participants in the Divine Services and listening deeply to the meaningful sermons of the pastor, which gave them comfort in sorrow, and the supported them in their time of need”<sup>13</sup>.

Preaching God's Word, in the life of Fr. E. Kovch not limited to the church and pulpit. He knew that faith should be declared publicly, without fear of any consequences, especially if it occurred in the context of the dominant occupational government. A good opportunity for delivering sermons beyond the church, was the annual celebration on Epiphany („Jordan”), with a procession to the river Hnyla Lypa in Peremyshliany where there was a solemn blessing of water and Fr. Emilian proclaimed passionate sermon. Many times after such public religious actions, Fr. Kovch was summoned to the police, which lead to arrests and short periods of detainment<sup>14</sup>.

Finally, the arrest of Fr. Kovch by the Gestapo was mainly due to his courageous preaching activities, as he had sharply criticized the occupiers for their crimes in his speeches, especially for the deportation of civilians for forced labor to Germany. In addition, the tireless preacher urged parishioners at all costs not to cooperate with the Nazis in their extermination of the Jews, despite all sorts

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 27–28.

<sup>11</sup> X. Сніжна, *Блаженний Отець Еміліян Ковч. Парох Майданека*, op. cit., p. 13–14.

<sup>12</sup> М. Шкільник, *З моїх споминів про о. Е. Ковча*, Вінніпер 03.04.1960, Архів Постуляційного Центру УГКЦ (manuscript), p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> The Jordan water blessing in Peremyshliany, where pastor ardently preached occurred even during the two-years of the atheistic Soviet rule, through the authority of Fr. E. Kovch. Although such „Jordan campaigns”, causing frequent summons of the pastor to the NKVD, but they usually ended as largely successful for the father, as a gentle disposition, ability to engage in dialogue and discussion with representatives of security agencies, as well as his popularity among the people stopped the application of punitive measures towards him. Although it is known that Fr. Kovch because of his active pastoral work was included in the list of potential victims of the Soviet „Red Terror” (Ibid., p. 33–34, 36).

of career promise on their part, and also encouraged the young not to enter the service of the Nazi police<sup>15</sup>.

## 2. Liturgia – liturgical celebrations

Liturgy in the Church is the key plane, for beginning the realization of the Kingdom of God. This is why Fr. E. Kovch not only carefully performed liturgical practices<sup>16</sup>, but devoted his only theological publication, entitled „Why ours flee from us”, to the liturgical problem and to the issue of formation of future priests. In the book, the author shows his concern about people leaving their native rite and Church, he sees the solution to this problem in conducting a pastoral-liturgical reform in the Church<sup>17</sup>. Proposed changes primarily relate to the needs of the modern use of the Ukrainian language in worship, the use of clear liturgical texts, correct singing, modernizing the requirements of fasting and other details which in the context of worship should bring every particular believer to the essence and meaning of mistagogia and liturgical spirituality of the Byzantine-Ukrainian rite<sup>18</sup>.

Realizing the liturgical area, Fr. Kovch besides the usual worship, organized an annually special liturgical congress in Peremyshliany called the „Eucharistic Congress”, which had as its objective to strengthen the faith and to deepen the devotion of people from the Peremyshliany deanery. These congresses were held periodically even in the conditions of occupation<sup>19</sup>. These celebrations were a time of intense liturgical prayers, processions with the Eucharistic Christ. During these congresses sermons were preached and there was an opportunity to partake in the sacrament of Penance<sup>20</sup>. The congresses in Peremyshliany were attended by many of the clergy and many faithful, as seen in preserved photographs<sup>21</sup>. „With no exaggeration it can be said that the Peremyshliany Eucharistic Congresses, were truly a feast of the humility of the human soul, prayer and song that with their reverence and emotionality squeezed out tears not from one pair of eyes and didn't stop for all three Eucharistic Day”<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 56–57, 60.

<sup>16</sup> В. Гриб, *Душпастирське служіння блаженного священномученика Еміліяна Ковча в період 1911–1944 рр.*, ор. cit., p. 74.

<sup>17</sup> Блаж. Е. Ковч, *Чому наші від нас утікають?*, Львів 2006, p. 7–8.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 9–61.

<sup>19</sup> М. Гаврилок, *Геройство пароха Перемисьлян, „Шлях-The Way”* (Philadelphia, PA, 06.11.1948), in: А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, ор. cit., p. 113.

<sup>20</sup> В. Гриб, *Душпастирське служіння блаженного священномученика Еміліяна Ковча в період 1911–1944 рр.*, ор. cit., p. 64–66.

<sup>21</sup> А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, ор. cit., p. 42–45.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 39–41.

During the Nazi occupation of Peremyshliany, first Jew who was baptized by Fr. Kovch, was a lawyer from a mixed Ukrainian-Jewish family. This catechumen was careful prepared for receiving the Sacrament. Subsequently the new baptized, like a „missionary” described the Christian truths to other Jews who saw this as a chance to save themselves. Because of this in Peremyshliany approximately 25% of the total Jewish population wished to be baptized<sup>23</sup>. Although the certificate of baptism, which Fr. Kovch gave newly baptized Jews could help them very little in escaping from death, yet the pastor from Peremyshliany was one of the few priests who massively baptized Jews, and even asked German police permission to celebrate a Liturgy for Jewish Christian in the ghetto, which the Gestapo organized in the city upon their arrival. Thus, the pastoral work of Fr. E. Kovch can be described as an attempt to take care of fulfilling the liturgical and sacramental ministries, even at the risk of his own freedom and life<sup>24</sup>. Because of his refusal to promise to the Nazi government to stop baptizing Jews, Fr. Kovch did not use this opportunity to be released, but voluntarily remained in prison<sup>25</sup>.

Fr. E. Kovch not neglect his liturgical practice while in Lviv prison, where, according to fellow prisoners, he was severely tortured and interrogated. He periodically, whenever possible, served the Divine Liturgy in the cell. To implement this, in a letter he asked his daughter to visit the monasteries in the city asking for liturgical wine and to pass it to him in prison<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, as noted by his cellmate, at dawn, when all the other prisoners still slept, he quietly whispered his prayer with hands lifted up, serving the Divine Liturgy, and Blessed all those present<sup>27</sup>.

Very little information remains from Fr. E. Kovch's stay in the death camp „Majdanek”, but reminiscences of a Lithuanian former prisoner of the concentration camp, characterize the personality of Fr. Emilian as an „especially meaningful and valuable person who became the spiritual leader for all the prisoners”<sup>28</sup>. His „liturgy” pastoral work in Majdanek presupposed joint prayers, hearing of confessions and participating in spiritual conversations with inmates, the purpose of which was to support their spirit, advising them and te-

<sup>23</sup> М. Гаврилюк, *Геройство пароха Перемішлян*, „Шлях-The Way” (Philadelphia, PA, 06.11.1948), in: А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>24</sup> А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., p. 58–59.

<sup>25</sup> А. Курдидик, *Криваві сліди*, „Неділя” (Ashafenburg, 25.07.1948), в: А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ред.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., p. 117–118.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

aching the basics of the Christian faith<sup>29</sup>. This was facilitated by the tolerance of the barracks guard who allowed Fr. Emilian to serve in his priestly functions: confess, give the Holy Eucharist and serve the Divine Liturgy in the corner<sup>30</sup>. Because of this the „pastor of Majdanek” received general respect among the prisoners and great love that manifested in many inmates volunteering to assist Fr. Kovch in performing his camp duties<sup>31</sup>.

### 3. Diakonia – charitable acts

A particular virtue that characterized Fr. E. Kovch was „full selflessness and complete lack of interest in material goods”<sup>32</sup>. Evidence of this was his modest and patched priestly garment, his family’s simple lifestyle in the parish house, even though the parish in Peremyshliany was numerous and possessed considerable lands<sup>33</sup>. This unpretentious lifestyle of Fr. Kovch, in practice meant that most of the material resources which were in his dispose were directed to charity and through this he showed mercy to those in need<sup>34</sup>.

At the beginning of his priestly ministry, as a pastor in Yugoslavia, in Kozarats, Fr. Emilian often traveled with his pastoral visit to the faithful, especially those most in need, who lived far away in the mountains. After these visits, he often returned home with several young children from poor families, bringing them into his own apartment in order to feed them and allow them play with the toys of his children, and to have a fun and interesting time<sup>35</sup>.

The Kovch family not only constantly engaged in charitable activities in relation to members of their parish communities. A well known case is the care for a family of Ukrainian refugees after the fall of Tsar in Russia in 1917, who had fled to Western Europe through Galicia. So Fr. Kovch and his wife provided several weeks of refuge in their home for a family of a stranger – Jacob Miller. Later, the wife and daughter of the escaped man decided to go back home, and Jacob was allowed to live for some time in an empty house in the village of

<sup>29</sup> Р. Кабачій, *Парох Майданека*, „Україна молода” (Київ, 02.02.2006), р. 9.

<sup>30</sup> А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., р. 68.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., р. 65–66.

<sup>32</sup> М. Шкільник, *Апостольський відвагою і євангельський вірністю*, in: А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, р. 129.

<sup>33</sup> П. Сивіцький, *Отець Еміліян Ковч наш християнський герой*, „Наше слово” (Warsaw, 15.04.2001), р. 3.

<sup>34</sup> П. Конвіцький, *За нас, християн... Розповідь про сім’ю Ковч – українських священників, патріотів*, „Галицький Шлях” 68 (1991), in: А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., р. 135.

<sup>35</sup> А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., р. 16.

Korosno until the time when the situation improves in his homeland. The man became a close friend of the Kovchs, living in Korosno until his death. Because of this merciful act of Fr. Kovch he converted and was baptized, and went on to become an exemplary member of the parish community<sup>36</sup>.

Fr. E. Kovch often personally showed spontaneous acts of aid to the poor and those in need, where he worked. A special place for charitable ministry was the school in Peremysliany and Korosno, where Fr. Kovch briefly taught religious studies<sup>37</sup>. His daughter Anna Maria mentions a situation with her classmate and friend Katrusya, whose father died in the war. Fr. Emilian helped the fatherless girl buy school books and school clothes, but also did this to education his daughter about being charitable, buying books for the poor girl, he offered Anna Mary to borrow them from Katrusya when they were necessary for her studies<sup>38</sup>.

At the parish, Fr. Kovch organized charitable fundraisers to help poor families, especially those affected by World War I, having lost the main breadwinner of the family. Some of the fields in the village Korosno, which the parish rented to farmers for significant pay, Fr. Emilian divided into smaller parcels and offered them to the parish widows to use for free<sup>39</sup>.

Fr. Emilian also didn't forget about charity and mercy when he was imprisoned. Letters from Fr. Kovch written to his family from the prison in Lviv, asking to convey necessary things for him, also mention the needs of the families of his cellmates. Fr. Emilian requested material help for their wives and children who were in trouble because their husbands are currently under arrest. In addition, he asked them to inform the families about their detained relatives in the prison<sup>40</sup>.

#### 4. Koinonia – community building

The ability to live in a community and to build it based on Christian principles and values, Fr. Emilian acquired in his native home, as he was the fifth and youngest child in his family. In addition, being a married priest, he was an exemplary father to his own six children<sup>41</sup>. His talent to create good relationships within his family, spread to his ability to build his own parish community

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 92–93.

<sup>37</sup> П. Конвіцький, *За нас, християн... Розповідь про сім'ю Ковч – українських священиків, патріотів*, „Галицький Шлях” 68 (1991), in: А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>38</sup> А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., p. 93–94.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 95–96.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 102–104.

<sup>41</sup> В. Гриб, *Душпастирське служіння блаженного священномученика Еміліяна Ковча в період 1911–1944 рр.*, op. cit., p. 14, 30.

through his pastoral care. This contributed to the fact that two of Fr. Emilian's sons also became priests<sup>42</sup>.

Fr. Kovch paid particular attention to the youth, aspiring to bring each of them up to be mature Christians. Except for the church, where he readily met with the growing generation, another place where youth often gathered was the parish house. Systematic formational conversation, where Fr. Kovch often took the role of both father and older brother, were supported by integration games, communication and sharing a meal. Often young people even slept in the house of the priest<sup>43</sup>.

His obvious efforts to strengthen the parish community were a trademark of Fr. Emilian's work in the town of Kozarats in Yugoslavia, with Ukrainian immigrants. From the recollections of his wife and daughter it becomes clear that Fr. Kovch was rarely at home during this time, because he often traveled with pastoral visit to the mountainous areas to visit his parishioners who lived very poor, which made it difficult for them to attend worship in Kozarats<sup>44</sup>.

Becoming the pastor in the Greek Catholic parish in Peremyshliany in 1922, Fr. Emilian finds it neglected. Therefore he expands his activities beyond the four walls of the church in order to create a strong parish community. He rebuilt the ruined church of St. Nicholas, builds a bell tower and organizes the cemetery, restores the People's House, where he unites the congregation into a theatrical troupe and initiates joint profitable activities – within the restored building bank opened as well as a joint warehouse-store<sup>45</sup>.

Fr. Emilian built another building in Peremyshliany, to start a Ukrainian pre-school, giving the Sisters Servants care over the children of his parishioners, organizes the parish youth into youth groups and a church choir<sup>46</sup>. Therefore, we can affirm that the pastor, to implement „koinonia”, not only shaped the religious life of their spiritual „sheep”, but also develops cultural and educational sector as well as promote the economic development of his fellow villagers<sup>47</sup>. Fr. Kovch was also very active in developing a strong parish community in the village of Korosno<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> В. Мацелох, За перемогу Божої і української правди, „За вільну Україну” 12 (2011), р. 9; А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., р. 12.

<sup>43</sup> В. Щербій, *Я його бачив майже щодня зблизка*, in: А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., р. 121–122.

<sup>44</sup> А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., р. 14.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., р. 21–24; В. Гриб, *Душпастирське служіння блаженного священномученика Еміліяна Ковча в період 1911–1944 рр.*, op. cit., р. 90.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., р. 89–91.

<sup>47</sup> А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., р. 22–23.

<sup>48</sup> *Шематизм духовенства Львівської архієпархії на рік Божий 1938*, Львів 1938, р. 63.

A special opportunity for building parish life was the organization of pilgrimages by Fr. Kovch, which were remembered by many residents of Peremyshliany. Fr. Emilian organized walking pilgrimages to the churches in the nearby villages of: Borshchiv, Ushkovychi, Lypivtsi, Vyshnivchyk and Vovkiv. From the initiative of Fr. Kovch, there were also youth pilgrimage by railway to more distant pilgrimage places. For example, a pilgrimage under the slogan „Ukrainian Youth for Christ” took place in 1933 to the village of Zarvanytsia and the city of Hoshiv. Preparing in advance for these types of events Fr. Emilian initiated the youth of the parish in plays and performances, fairs, celebrations, to be able to raise funds for those participants of the pilgrimage who could not afford to pay for their own tickets for the train. Youth pilgrimage by train were an excellent opportunity to strengthen the parish community, since organizing them Fr. Kovch rented a whole railway car, which was filled to the brim with young people<sup>49</sup>.

Summarizing the analysis of the life and work of Blessed Fr. Emilian Kovch, it may be argued that his pastoral ministry was a successful attempt to realize the Kingdom of God in practice. He performed this task emphatically on his parishes from the very moment of his ordination, and until his martyrdom in the concentration camp. With charismatic preaching Fr. Emilian, concerned about the morale of his faithful, preached interesting relevant topics from the pulpit. In a word, he inspired people’s hope, consoled them, supported and inspired them to fight in difficult situations, urging them to be courageous witnesses of Christ’s truth. In addition, Fr. Kovch with much dignity and care served the liturgical office and performed his sacramental ministry, accompanying those men entrusted to him on their journey to meet God. This becomes especially evident in relation to the Jews who he protected from Nazis persecution, harboring and baptizing them. Fr. Kovch initiated liturgical reforms, the implementation of which would make services more meaningful and understandable in modern times. Fr. Emilian also devoted a lot of his attention and energy to acts of charity towards the most needy: refugees, orphans, widows, and prisoners. In his ministry he wanted to convey to his „spiritual flock” a moral code for Christians in that world. For this to happen he worked on building one true Christian community that would unite the faithful in the love of God and their neighbor. That’s why Fr. E. Kovch paid a lot of attention to the problems of education of the youth, seeing that they were the future for the Church and nation.

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<sup>49</sup> А.-М. Ковч-Баран (ed.), *За Божі правди і людські права. Блаженний священномученик Еміліян Ковч*, op. cit., p. 38.

## Streszczenie

### Duszpasterstwo w służbie Królestwa Bożego – bł. ks. Emilian Kowcz (1884–1944)

Artykuł ukazuje działalność duszpasterską błogosławionego męczennika obozu koncentracyjnego „Majdanek” Emiliana Kowcza (1884–1944), kapłana Ukraińskiej Cerkwi Grecko-Katolickiej, uwzględniając cztery płaszczyzny pastoralnego zaangażowania Kościoła na rzecz budowania Królestwa Bożego: martyrii, liturgii, diakonii oraz koinonii. Działalność „proboszcza Majdanka” obejmuje jego długoletnie zaangażowanie jako duszpasterza w różnych parafiach (1911–1942) oraz posługę pasterską w warunkach więziennych w latach 1942–1944: najpierw we lwowskim więzieniu, a później jako więzień obozu koncentracyjnego „Majdanek” koło Lublina. W tekście została przedstawiona sylwetka ks. Kowcza jako utalentowanego kaznodziei, który dbał o wzrost wiary oraz wysoki poziom moralności swojej trzody, odważnie głosząc prawdę Chrystusową i potwierdzając ją swoim przykładem. Poprzez słowo pocieszał, pokrzepiał oraz umacniał swoich wiernych w trudnych czasach. Czynności liturgiczne sprawował wiernie i gorliwie. Jego postawa była heroiczna, o czym świadczą liczne przypadki udzielenia przez niego chrztu wielu Żydom w czasie ich prześladowania przez niemieckich nazistów, wskutek czego poniósł śmierć męczeńską. Posługa charytatywna wymagała od ks. Emiliana wielkiego zaangażowania ze względu na konieczność udzielania wsparcia materialnego ubogim i potrzebującym: uchodźcom, sierotom, wdowom oraz więźniom. Bł. Emilian Kowcz starał się również o budowanie i wzrost wspólnoty wierzących w Chrystusa w duchu koinonii, kształtując w nich postawy nacechowane solidarnością, braterstwem oraz miłością do Boga i bliźniego.

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