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## THE SYNODS OF PRZEMYŚL BISHOP JÓZEF SEBASTIAN PELCZAR OF 1902, 1908 AND 1914

Diocesan synods have been one of the most important church institutions in the process of enacting local law for centuries; their significance, however, frequently went beyond this field in different epochs. In European societies at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, due to the influence of the Enlightenment and democratic trends, there were attempts to see synods as a collegial institution with characteristics and aims similar to secular legislative assemblies. Confronted with the traditional hierarchical structure of the Church, these trends proved to be dangerous and they were regarded as a threat both by the papacy and numerous bishops. This was one of the most important reasons for disappearing synods in Europe during the period of revolutionary unrest. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the situation of the Church became more stable in the post-revolutionary world, there was an increase in the number of synods convened and in the support of the popes for the above-mentioned trend. Despite this, from time to time, there were situations when, according to Rome, a synod prepared in a diocese could have undesirable consequences and then the pope recommended postponing it, or he even overruled its decisions<sup>1</sup>.

In the Polish dioceses, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (the period of the Partitions of Poland), not a single synod was convened, in spite of the fact that a few attempts were made<sup>2</sup>. Only at the beginning of the new century, synods were reborn in Poland. This initiative was launched by one man, Bishop Sebastian Pelczar, who convened as many as three synods in the diocese of Przemyśl in the period until the outbreak of the First World War. These synods played an important role in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Diecezja chełmińska. Zarys historyczno-statystyczny*, Pelplin 1928, p. 61; G. Bujak, *Synody diecezjalne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce w latach 1922-1931*, Kielce 2010, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> B. Kumor, *Ustrój i organizacja Kościoła polskiego w okresie niewoli narodowej 1772-1918*, Kraków 19080, pp. 361-362.

process of restoring diocesan synods in the Polish Church. It was more and more obvious that in difficult times at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Polish Catholicism had to face challenges caused by social changes. And Galicia was not an exception. Despite strong traditional faith, the clergy observed a negative influence the new trends had on the faithful both in towns and in the country<sup>3</sup>.

These problems were visible in preparation for the next synods and in the decisions these gatherings made.

Bishop Józef Sebastian Pelczar (1842-1924) was first appointed a suffragan bishop of Przemyśl on 27 February 1899 and then an ordinary bishop of this diocese on 17 December 1900. Holding this position, he convened three diocesan synods and prepared the synod in 1924, which, however, did not take place due to his death<sup>4</sup>. Resuming diocesan synods and then their regular convening contributed to the fact that Bishop Pelczar's synods can be regarded as a separate chapter in the history of this institution when compared to other Polish dioceses. Convening the synod was announced by the bishop while he was taking over the Cathedral of Przemyśl in December in 1900, which was followed by rapid and intensive preparations.

An important thing in the preparations for the synod of 1902 was the action of raising the clergy awareness about the significance and aims of synods both in the past and at the time when the above-mentioned synod was being prepared. This purpose was achieved by publishing a series of articles in *Kroniki Diecezji Przemyskiej (KDP)*. The articles were read not only by priests in the diocese of Przemyśl but also in other Polish dioceses which were under partitioners' rule. This is evidenced by numerous notes and comments in the church press, particularly in the areas under Prussian and Austrian rule<sup>5</sup>.

Rev. Władysław Kochowski's work *Synod Diecezjalny* (printed in episodes from August 1901 to April 1902) was an example of this systematic information campaign. The author wrote about the beginnings of synods in the universal Church and their development in the post-Tridentine period. He also presented the reasons for their disappearance in the period of the Enlightenment and mentioned the synod in Pistoia of 1786 as a tragic example of this institution being dominated by secular authority, which wanted to use this council for its own purposes. The author accused the synod of 'a false principle of democracy in the Church and emphasized that it would be better not to convene synods rather than allowing them to be changed into 'rallies'. The further development of Josephinism 'was not conducive to thinking about synods'. In addition, these gatherings were not con-

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<sup>3</sup> D. Olszewski, *Polska kultura religijna na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 357-259.

<sup>4</sup> K. Krasowski, *Biskupi katolicki II Rzeczypospolitej. Słownik biograficzny*, Poznań 1996, pp. 191-194.

<sup>5</sup> J. Bar, *Działalność ustawodawcza biskupa przemyskiego J. S. Pelczara (1900-1924)*, „Prawo Kanoniczne”, 19 (1976) no. 3-4, pp. 86-87.

vened as the papacy feared unlimited freedom of discussion and decision-making by a majority vote<sup>6</sup>.

In the subsequent episodes of his work, the author analysed gradual revival of the synods, which was accompanied by apprehensive feelings, after 1848. When the Spring of Nations and social unrest came to an end, this process developed fastest in German dioceses. As early as in 1848, the episcopate of this church discussed the possibility of the revival of the diocesan synods at the meeting in Würzburg. Rev. W. Kochowski noted that this was due to the pressure brought to bear on the bishops by the lower clergy. He also remarked that this pressure was often 'inappropriate'. Among the demands unacceptable to the author were the ones for having half of the lay participants in synods and letting them discuss all issues, including church discipline. In addition, he strongly objected to the demands for decision-making by a majority vote, which would be binding for a bishop, regardless of his opinion in the matters under discussion<sup>7</sup>.

The process of the revival of the diocesan synods went more smoothly in Catholic Austria, although also in this country the pope, in the letter to the bishops who wanted to convene synods, ordered only to inform the secular authority about convening this assembly and its statutes without the possibility of the interference of this authority in the whole process. In addition, the author mentioned that the issues related to diocesan synods were to be arranged during the First Vatican Council and even a suitable scheme was prepared for this purpose. This plan was not, however, accepted due to the fact that the council was discontinued. In spite of this, this project provided the bishops with 'a valuable clue' about how to set objectives and hold synods at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The council's scheme included the significant change: synods did not have to be convoked every year but every three years. The intervals between the synods, however, could be prolonged with the pope's consent<sup>8</sup>.

The author noted that a few synods had been held in different regions in Austria, including Czech and Slovak dioceses in the first years after signing the concordat. He also mentioned that in the archdiocese of Gniezno and Poznań, Archbishop Ledóchowski, who had not succeeded in convoking the synod, had held the substitute congregations of deans. The decision made during these gatherings, after being approved by the bishop, became legally binding in the diocese. It is worth noting that the initiative on the scope of the issues to be discussed was granted not only to the bishop but also to the deans. They were obliged to notify the bishop about the matters they would like to discuss and the directives they wanted to adopt 30 days before the planned convocation<sup>9</sup>.

The things which had an impact on the change in the approach of the church circles towards synods were connected with the general transformation of Europe-

<sup>6</sup> W. Kochowski, *O synodzie diecezjalnym*, „Kronika Diecezji Przemyskiej” (KDP), 1 (1901) no. 10, p. 351.

<sup>7</sup> Such demands were presented in petitions to the Bishop of Freiburg. W. Kochowski, *O synodzie diecezjalnym*, KDP, 1 (1901), no. 10, p. 352.

<sup>8</sup> W. Kochowski, *O synodzie diecezjalnym*, KDP, 1 (1901), no. 10, p. 353.

<sup>9</sup> W. Kochowski, *O synodzie diecezjalnym*, KDP, 1 (1901) no. 11, p. 395.

an societies as well as becoming accustomed to the democratic ideas, despite the long-lasting lack of formal acceptance of these trends. One of the manifestations of this kind of attitude was Rev. Kochowski's arguments for gathering the clergy and holding debates as this method was used by forces hostile to the Church. He saw in this process 'the spirit of the times', although, of course, there was no question of democratization of the Church or returning to the practices of the Synod of Pistoia<sup>10</sup>.

The preparations for the first synod of Bishop S. Pelczar were accompanied by hopes of restoring synods and their role in regulating diocesan matters and on the other hand, by fears about radicalism infiltrating the Church. That was why Rev. W. Kochowski strongly emphasized a special position of the bishop as a sole legislator in this assembly. The purpose of this approach was to draw the clergy's attention to the fact that a synod is not a democratic institution, and the diocesan law is not passed by a majority vote, which is typical of secular parliaments. In the article of August 1901, the author wrote that in a synod the bishop could pass the law even against the will of all gathered, and it would still be valid and would apply to everybody<sup>11</sup>.

It seems that the author was aware of the problems with understanding certain aspects of synods, which could also appear among the clergy of the diocese of Przemyśl. Emphasizing bishop's unassailable position in making laws and issuing directives, he warned priests about using synod discussion to 'pour out their grievances'. He was, however, inconsistent, as in the same article he stated that bishop's authority was paternal and that he should give his subordinate clerics the opportunity to 'pour out their troubles and present their demands'. He also noticed that 'people can be hurt when they are only given orders, sometimes they would like to have an impact on the way the diocese is ruled. This heart's desire should be satisfied at the synod'<sup>12</sup>.

Rev. W. Kochowski presented the most important reasons for convening synods which were as follows: adapting the common canon law and metropolitan law to the diocesan needs, reminding people about forgotten laws, strengthening discipline among the clergy and appointing diocesan officials (examiners and judges), who were to be appointed, according to common law, by a synod<sup>13</sup>.

When discussing the issues connected with conducting synods, the author refers to the work written by Benedict XVI *De synodo dioeclesana*, stressing the necessity of adapting its directives to 'the spirit of the times'. He claimed that adhering firmly to the old forms would lead to the paralysis of this institution. He referred to the simplicity of numerous former forms of holding synods in the contemporary practice of Rome<sup>14</sup>. It seems that the purpose of these remarks was to calm down the ardent followers of tradition. In this indirect way, we can guess the existence of tension and the clergy's contradictory expectations towards synods.

<sup>10</sup> W. Kochowski, *O synodzie diecezjalnym*, KDP, 1 (1901) no. 8, pp. 295-296.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, p. 298.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 300.

<sup>13</sup> W. Kochowski, *O synodzie diecezjalnym*, KDP, 2 (1902) no. 4, p. 162.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 168.

Inspiring the series of educational articles for clerics and agreeing on publishing them in the official diocesan periodical, the bishop wanted to lower high expectations about a synod, and on the other hand, he wanted to dispel the concerns of the conservative clerics.

Rev. W. Kochowski wrote that as far as the organization of the synod was concerned, 'everything depends on the bishop'. He also added that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a unified way of preparing and holding synods was formed on the basis of the experience in various dioceses<sup>15</sup>. The author noted that before synods were convened some bishops had convoked synod commissions consisting of the parish clergy, the aim of which was to draw up the projects of the statutes; others entrusted this task to a small group and then sent the projects to the deans and more prominent priests in order to receive comments. Another way was to ask the deans about essential issues concerning the local Church and discussing the replies by the specially formed committees. And only then were the projects of the statutes prepared<sup>16</sup>.

Rev. W. Kochowski presented arguments for convoking synods. He explained the way the preparations should be made and how the assembly should be held. As early as in January 1901, Bishop S. Pelczar convened the congregation to prepare the synod. The congregation consisted of the members of the chapter, professors of the theological seminary, the spiritual father of the seminary and the chancellor of the curia. In October 1901, the two-session congregation decided on the issues the synod was to address and appointed officials for particular tasks, who prepared some materials necessary for formulating the statutes. Using these materials, three commissions (composed of 20 clerics each) worked on the projects of the statutes. In total, 10% of the diocesan clergy were involved in the preparatory work at this stage. In order to familiarize clerics with the general outline of the synod issues, a list of the chapter titles of the planned statutes was published in KDP; and a few weeks before the synod, an extensive instruction concerning this assembly was sent to its participants<sup>17</sup>.

The preparations for the synods in 1908 and 1914 were made in a slightly different way. First of all, no historical and theological analyses concerning synods were published in KDP. The periodical included no reports on the preparatory stage or information on the involvement of the parish priests. Bishop S. Pelczar decided that after the synod in 1902 there was no such need. Since the synod already took place in the diocese, the necessary experience was gained, and there was no need to look for further inspiration in this area.

In January 1908, KDP released the information about the planned synod, which was to be held on 25-27 August the same year. It was noted that the synod was to be the continuation of the previous one of 1902. The name used in the notification was a synod congregation instead of a synod. This was connected with the desire to limit external forms characteristic of a synod (solemn sessions),

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<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 168.

<sup>16</sup> W. Kochowski, *O synodzie diecezjalnym*, KDP, 2 (1902) no. 5, p. 208.

<sup>17</sup> W. Kochowski, *O synodzie diecezjalnym*, KDP, 1 (1901) no. 11, pp. 382-384.

to have more time for proper discussion (plenary sessions)<sup>18</sup>. It was necessary to ask Rome for special dispensation. The consent was granted to Bishop S. Pelczar in March 1908 and from that time on, the officially planned synod was called 'a synod congregation'<sup>19</sup>.

According to the declaration of January 1908, the aim of the congregation was to verify whether the synod decrees of 1902 were implemented, which directives should be changed and which matters should be regulated anew. Those who were entitled to participate in the synod were obliged to send their suggestions to the suffragan bishop by 15 April 1908. Then, the commission headed by Bishop Fischer was to prepare the draft amendments<sup>20</sup>.

It must be noted that, in comparison with 1902, the situation changed significantly in the universal Church and the diocese of Przemyśl in 1908. The faithful became more radical, but at the same time, the clergy grew to understand the importance of the social issue in pastoral work. This was reflected in the initiative undertaken by the bishop in the period after 1902, such as establishing the Catholic and Social Association in 1906, modelled on the German *Volksverein*, or organizing a course of the Catholic and social work in 1907, the reports of which were published in KDP<sup>21</sup>. An anti-modernist dispute escalated in the Church's womb, and the periodical for the clergy of Przemyśl published the encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis* by Pius X. The encyclical was accompanied by an extensive editorial commentary on the threats posed by modernism<sup>22</sup>.

Bishop S. Pelczar addressed some of these problems in *Summoning to the synod congregation* of 31 May 1908. He focused on the deteriorating situation of the Catholics in many countries, naming France. He pointed to the actions of masonry and socialist parties detrimental to the Church and anti-clericalism spreading everywhere. He noted that the activity of sects and groups with radical social programs intensified in numerous countries while modernism, condemned by Pius X, spread inside the Church. The picture of the modern world depicted in such apocalyptic colours required the decisive measures to be taken and a synod congregation would serve this purpose at the level of the Przemyśl diocese. The bishop instructed the clerics coming to the synod not to take solemn vestments (a rochet and a mantelletta) but the book of statutes of 1902 instead. Limiting external ceremonies and focusing on discussion and decision-making was meant to emphasize the seriousness of the moment<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Bar, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> *Akta i statuty kongregacji synodalnej. Synodu diecezjalnego dwudziestego odbytego w dniach 25, 26 i 27 sierpnia 1908 r. w Przemyślu pod przewodnictwem Józefa Sebastiana Pelczara biskupa przemyskiego ob. lac.*, Przemyśl 1908, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> *Zapowiedź konferencji synodalnej w r. 1908*, KDP, 8 (1908) no. 1-2, pp. 40-41.

<sup>21</sup> *Kurs praktycznych wykładów o pracy katolicko-społecznej, mający się odbyć 24 i 25 września b.r. w Przemyślu*, KDP, 7 (1907), no. 7-8, p. 291. *Sprawozdanie z kursu społecznego odbytego w Przemyślu dnia 24 i 25 września 1907*, KDP, 7 (1907) no. 9, p. 318; no. 10, p. 389.

<sup>22</sup> *Pascendi dominici gregis*, KDP, 7 (1907) no. 10, pp. 337-384.

<sup>23</sup> *Wezwanie na kongregację synodalną mającą się odbyć 25, 26, 27 sierpnia r. b. w Przemyślu*, KDP, 8 (1908) no. 6, pp. 221-225.

A similar synod, as a congregation, was held 7-9 July 1914 in the Jesuit college in Chyrów. Summoning to the synod also began with depicting the situation of the universal Church in black colours. The situation of the diocese of Przemyśl, however, seemed to be stable. The bishop stressed the fact of building numerous new churches, developing brotherhoods, organizing a number of parish missions and the Marian Congress in Przemyśl. Thanking God for many good initiatives which were successfully undertaken in the diocese of Przemyśl, he stated that there were a lot of matters to discuss and that was why he had decided to convoke the congregation. Due to the approaching war, the successive issues of KDP were released in a limited size and therefore they did not include any information about the preparations for the synod. Only in the statutes printed in 1916, in the introduction, we can find information that the draft statutes were prepared by bishop S. Pelczar cooperating with several clerics chosen by him.

Discussing the synods of 1902, 1908 and 1914, one can notice that the first of them (held on 12-22 August 1902) was of a different form from the others, which, as mentioned above, were called synod congregations. The first synod clearly referred to the experience and tradition mainly from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And therefore the meetings were divided into solemn and plenary sessions; the solemn sessions connected with elaborate liturgical rites occupied most of the time. The difference between these two types of sessions was also emphasized by the different places they were held. Solemn (ceremonial) sessions were held in the Cathedral of Przemyśl and plenary ones in the Franciscan church.

During the synod of 1902, the first morning solemn session of 19 August was only of a liturgical character. However, during the second solemn session, which was on the same day in the afternoon, the priests listened to the draft statutes, asked the bishop about various pastoral law cases and received answers to their questions<sup>24</sup>. In total, three solemn sessions and six plenary ones took place during the synod of 1902<sup>25</sup>.

During the synod of 1908, there was no division into solemn and plenary sessions. All sessions (6) were called congregations and received consecutive numbers. Every day two sessions were held, in the morning and in the afternoon. During each session, Bishop S. Pelczar delivered an ascetic sermon because the synod was combined with the retreats for priests<sup>26</sup>.

The synod of 1914 was a special one. It was organized on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bishop S. Pelczar's priestly ordination. The bishop intended to connect the synod meetings with the retreats for the diocesan clerics, and he received the consent from the Pope for this form of convocation, which probably influenced the place of the synod – the Jesuit monastery in Chyrów. The congregation began 6 July in the evening. Its most important element was an ascetic

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<sup>24</sup> *Acta et statuta synodi dioeceseanae premislensis quam A. D. 1902 Diebus 19, 20, 21, 22 Mensis Augusti habuit Josephus Sebastianus Pelczar episcopus premislensis latinorum*, Premisliae 1903, pp. 349-350.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 423.

<sup>26</sup> *Akta i statuty kongregacji synodalnej. Synodu diecezjalnego dwudziestego odbytego w dniach 25, 26 i 27 sierpnia 1908 r.*, pp. 11-31.

conference delivered by Bishop S. Pelczar. The ordinary gave five more similar conferences at the opening of each session called, similarly as in 1908, a congregation. After the bishop's speech, proper synod sessions began, which were also different from the ones in 1902 and 1908. During particular sessions the designated priests gave presentations on various aspects of the diocese. The presentations were followed by discussion, which was summed up by the bishop. Then the congregation adopted 'synod resolutions' which were practical recommendations and directives<sup>27</sup>.

In total, ten presentations were delivered. They were on the organizations for clerics (presentation 1 and 2), frequent Holy Communion and religious education at school (presentations 3 and 4), brotherhoods for adults and youth (presentations 6 and 7). The largest number of presentations (3) were devoted to social issues: combating drunkenness, organizing the Catholic and social campaigns, and threats related to emigration (presentations 8-10)<sup>28</sup>.

The synod sessions resulted in the legal acts announced by the power of the bishop. There were, however, slight differences in the forms of particular synods. The decisions made at the synod of 1902 were in the form of statutes (619 of them). They had a traditional structure dating back to the post-Tridentine era and were divided into ten chapters: faith, preaching the word of God and religious education, sacraments, God's service, the clergy, the church institutions and people connected with the Church, pastoral work, social issues and clerics' activity in public matters, worldly possessions of the Church, and the principles of the promulgation of the statutes. In addition, the synod resolutions included nine annexes concerning the life of clerics and fifteen instructions (for example on deans' duties or parish visitations). The printed statutes together with the acts of synod comprised over 430 pages. All statutes and most annexes were written in Latin.

The statutes of 1908 did not revoke the resolutions of 1902 but supplemented them. That was the reason why the synod had the system of statutes the same as in the previous synod, omitting only chapter 10 about the principles of the promulgation of statutes. These parts of the statutes and instructions which were not changed were not repeated, only the changes and amendments were given with the appropriate numbering. For example, chapter 7 was supplemented with the appendixes on emigration, and chapter 8 about the social issue – the appendix on the Catholic and social action. The appendixes in the two chapters mentioned above were written in Polish, and in the others – mainly in Latin. The printed edition of the synod documents comprised 156 pages.

The acts of the synod of 1914 differed markedly from the previous ones. They were in the form of the report on the particular sessions. Bishop S. Pelczar's ascetic conferences were summarized. The presentations were published in full, and they were followed by the summary of discussions with the names of the par-

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<sup>27</sup> *Akta Kongregacji Synodalnej czyli synodu diecezjalnego dwudziestego pierwszego odbytego w dniach 7. 8. 9 lipca 1914 roku w Chyrowie pod przewodnictwem Józefa Sebastiana Pelczara biskupa przemyskiego o. l.*, Przemysł 1916, pp. 110-111.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 110-111.



ticipants, ordinary's conclusions and synod resolutions. The acts of this synod amounted to 111 printed pages.

The directives of synods most often copied the instructions of the universal Church, adapting them to the local needs. Most of the issues in the resolutions were presented in a traditional form dating back to the solutions produced in the period after the Council of Trent. This concerned the functioning of the church institution, the life of the clergy, disciplinary issues, preaching the words of God and teaching the faithful. The new issue which appeared in the statutes of all three synods of Przemyśl was the social question. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the Church became interested in this issue, and the encyclical of Leo XIII *Rerum novarum* played a decisive role in noticing these kinds of problems.

The provisions of the Przemyśl synod of 1902 concerning social issues can be found in chapter 8 *De quaestione sociali et de clericorum circa res politicas agendi ratione*, comprising 39 statutes (stat. 544-587). They referred to the above-mentioned encyclical of Leo XIII. According to the synod, the reason for the rapid changes in the area of social relations was the development of the new industrial production methods. The synod pointed to the dangers arising from the solutions to the problems proposed by the forces hostile to the Church and religion: liberalism, socialism and communism. The synod believed that the Russian universities, which were the sources of nihilism and socialism, were responsible for the emergence of radicalism in social matters in the Polish territories. The assembly also listed the titles of the newspapers propagating these erroneous ideas: *Ognisko*, *Praca*, *Robotnik*, *Gazeta Robotnicza* (stat. 546). Next, the major errors of liberalism and socialism were discussed and condemned, and it was recommended that solutions to the social question should be sought in the teaching of popes and in the renewing of the moral order of the state and society. The synod also pointed out the responsibilities of the secular authorities in making law on social order and in maintaining a balance between employers and workers<sup>29</sup>.

In addition, the synod, on one hand, condemned the trade unions which referred to the class struggle and diminished the importance of the Church and religion in society, on the other hand, it called for supporting the unions which referred to the Catholic faith. It was noted that workers' problems were not so common in Przemyśl, but at the same time, one could notice the problem of the appearance of the radical views in the countryside caused by both real social problems and the campaign launched by the forces hostile to the Church and society. In order to counteract these phenomena, the synod told the clergy to look after the poor, to organize farmers' associations and poorhouses, to establish parish libraries and press reading rooms with a view to raising the religious awareness of the faithful. The synod discussed in detail how to run parish libraries as well as selecting appropriate books and newspapers (stat. 564-572). The clergy and lay people were told to be in contact with the bishop while being involved in social activities and to avoid organizations and views which are against the church teaching<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> *Acta et statuta synodi dioeceseanae premislensis quam A. D. 1902*, p. 297.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 301-304.

The next synod of 1908 supplemented the directives concerning the social issues in the statutes of 1902 included in chapter 8 *The appendix on the Catholic and social action*. Its introduction contains the information that there were still priests who underestimated the importance of activities in this area or even were against them. To counteract this, the synod argued that conducting the Catholic and social action stems from Christ's commandment and is part of pastoral duties. The achievements of the clergy from the Poznań district were given as an example of using the Catholic and social action 'to gain the trust of people and form them into a close-order regiment so that Protestantism, Germanisation and socialism could not have access to them'<sup>31</sup>.

It was reminded that the Catholic and Social Union had been established by Bishop S. Pelczar in 1906. The synod mentioned its religious, moral, social and national tasks as well as its responsibilities in the area of education, charity and economic matters. It was emphasized that the parish branches of the union do not have to be involved in all the areas mentioned above, but they should focus on the local needs<sup>32</sup>.

A lot of attention was devoted to discussing the Catholic nature of the social action. It was stressed that those who conducted the action should obtain the consent of the bishop and should be in regular contact with him as he implemented the recommendations of the Holy Father in this regard. Complete subordination to the clerical authority was meant to prevent mistakes the Catholic social activists made in France and Italy. It was pointed out that social activity should be undertaken in a spirit of 'the Christian democracy', which ought to be understood as 'introducing the principles of Christian justice and love into private, public and social life'. The priests were reminded that social activity should be aimed at 'the glory of God and the good of souls'. That was why it was supposed to be ancillary to the traditional pastoral work. The clergy, however, were warned not to be concentrated only on traditional forms of chaplaincy: 'A good priest is able to combine spiritual duties with social and civic ones, and although he is burdened with work, he is able to find time for everything'<sup>33</sup>.

It was emphasized that in social work priests should cooperate with lay people, who had to be properly prepared for such work. The following organizations were intended to serve this purpose: the Sodality of Our Lady, countrywomen's associations, Christian mothers' associations and landowners' associations. The Catholic and Social Association was pointed out as the organization supervising all social activities undertaken in the diocese and parishes<sup>34</sup>.

During the synod of 1914, Rev. Kazimierz Kotula delivered a presentation *The revival of the Catholic and social action*. The author, as he claimed, based his speech on the teaching and directives of Bishop S. Pelczar. He began with an explanation of how to understand a social issue and social work: 'a social issue

<sup>31</sup> *Akta i statuty kongregacji synodalnej. Synodu diecezjalnego dwudziestego odbytego w dniach 25, 26 i 27 sierpnia 1908 r.*, p. 123.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 126.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 127.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 127-128.

is material poverty and moral misery of some classes resulted from a new way of production. Social work is the removal of this poverty and misery'. The issues presented in this way were part of charity work done by the Church. Due to this reason, social work was an essential element of pastoral work, answering the new needs and using new methods. Social work, being part of pastoral work, had to be done under bishop's direction and with his consent. In this context the author mentioned the mistakes made in France, Italy and Germany, where the Catholic and social action was conducted with considerable independence from the church authority and even papal teaching. He gave an example of the management of the Munich social action which stated that 'the Holy Church does not have a direct power to handle economic matters'. Referring to such an approach, the author of the synod report explained that 'there is no doubt that economic matters are tightly connected with moral principles and the Holy Church has to be actively involved also in this area'. This, in turn, meant that the Catholic and social work 'had to be under episcopate's close control and that it could not go beyond the law of the Church or even God'. The further part concentrated on a social activity whose purpose was to assist in leading people to God and that was why it should be done under control of the diocesan organization which was responsible for this kind of activity. He pointed out that this type of organization in the diocese of Przemyśl was the Catholic and Social Association established by Bishop S. Pelczar in 1906<sup>35</sup>.

The aim of this extensive lecture was to strengthen priests' conviction that social activity of the clergy, which seems to have raised doubts and fears, was the duty of every priest as it was an integral component of modern pastoral work.

Particular elements of the presentation were concluded with the appropriate demands concerning social activity of priests. Then all participants of the synod accepted all these demands as 'synod resolutions' by acclamation. The resolutions said that social work was part of pastoral work and therefore each parish was obliged to establish a Catholic and Social Association, to build parish houses intended for meetings of the parish organizations and to establish a diocesan fund for social activity; the last point emphasized the necessity of separating social involvement from political activity<sup>36</sup>.

Summing up the above-mentioned analyses of the synods organized by Bishop S. Pelczar, one needs to emphasize the significance of these gatherings for the revival of the synod tradition in the Polish dioceses at the end of the period of Poland's captivity. The synods mentioned above also aroused interest in the areas under the rule of other partitioners, and although there was no direct reference to them in the synods organized in the inter-war period, which took place in the new legal situation for the Church (after the Code of Canon Law was published in 1917), we can see similarities of some forms related to organizing and conducting synods prepared for the Przemyśl synod of 1902<sup>37</sup>. What is noteworthy is the anal-

<sup>35</sup> *Akta Kongregacji Synodalnej czyli synodu diecezjalnego dwudziestego pierwszego odbytego w dniach 7. 8. 9 lipca 1914 roku*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87.

<sup>37</sup> G. Bujak, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

ysis of the approach to the social issues and their inclusion in the resolutions of the synods organized by Bishop S. Pelczar. This analysis reflects both the increase in the significance of these issues and more extensive approach to them in the resolutions of the synods organized in 1908 and 1914 in comparison with the synod of 1902. It is believed that general increase in the importance of the social issue in the diocese of Przemyśl at the time (visible in the teaching of Bishop S. Pelczar and the establishment of the Catholic and Social Association) should be associated with the shock the whole Polish society, especially the Catholics, experienced during the revolution in the Kingdom of Poland in 1905<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> I. Zaleska, *Kościół a Narodowa Demokracja w Królestwie Polskim do wybuchu I wojny światowej*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 181-182; *Rok 1905 to początek nowoczesnej polityki*, in: *Rewolucja 1905. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej*, ed. K. Piskała, W. Marzec, Warszawa 2013, pp. 74-78.

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## **THE SYNODS OF PRZEMYŚL BISHOP JÓZEF SEBASTIAN PELCZAR OF 1902, 1908 AND 1914**

### **Summary**

In the 19th century, no diocesan synods were convened in Polish lands. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that Bishop J.S. Pelczar organized three synods in 1902, 1908 and 1914. They played a crucial role in the revival of the synod life in Polish Church, which occurred after regaining independence in 1918.

These synods had their internal dynamics and reflected important social and religious changes. A special attention should be paid to the synod of 1902. Numerous priests, including parish priests and curates, were involved in preparing synod statutes. Another important element was a discussion held during deanery congregations where parish priests could put forward their suggestions. Through taking part in these preparatory forms, priests could feel that they contributed to the regulations the synod introduced. A proper synod is of a formal and ceremonial nature, which is in accordance with the church tradition dating back to the post-Tridentine period. In general, the synod was of a liturgical nature and thus there was not much time to discuss the statutes.

In order to allocate more time to discussion and reduce ceremonies, Bishop S. Pelczar decided to convene the two subsequent synods of 1908 and 1914 as synod congregations. The character of the discussion also changed. Instead of the traditional reading of the statutes, bishops and other speakers gave their presentations followed by discussions, after which synod directives were formulated.

Synod gatherings resulted in legal decisions announced by the bishop who had the power to do so. Each time the decisions had a slightly different form despite the fact that they were based on the statutes. The synod of 1902 passed 619 statutes; they had a very traditional form and structure typical of the post-Tridentine period.

The statutes of 1908 and 1914 did not revoke the resolutions of 1902 but supplemented and clarified them taking account of the evaluation of their effects in practice. Their aim was to supplement and clarify the previous resolution, not to make dramatic changes. The acts of the synod differed markedly from the previous ones. These were the reports of the synod sessions. Bishop's ascetic conferences were summarized while problem presentations delivered by priests were published in full. Then the discussions and bishop's conclusions were summarized, which was followed by the synod resolutions concerning the issues addressed in the presentations. The resolutions focused on conclusions and recommendations on how to solve some problems, including pastoral ones.

Keywords: a synod; the diocese of Przemyśl; Bishop Józef Pelczar

*Translated by Aneta Kiper*

## **PRZEMYSKIE SYNODY DIECEZJALNE BISKUPA JÓZEFA SEBASTIANA PELCZARA Z 1902, 1908 I 1914 ROKU**

### **Streszczenie**

W XIX w. na ziemiach polskich nie odbywały się synody diecezjalne. Dopiero w początkach XX w. biskup Józef Sebastian Pelczar w Przemyślu odprawił trzy synody w latach 1902, 1908 i 1914. Stanowiły one ważny etap w odrodzeniu życia synodalnego w Kościele polskim, jakie nastąpiło po odzyskaniu niepodległości w 1918 r.

Synody te posiadały swoją wewnętrzną dynamikę i były odzwierciedleniem ważnych przemian społeczno-religijnych w diecezji przemyskiej. Na szczególną uwagę zasługuje synod z 1902 r. Poprzedziły go trwające dwa lata przygotowania w ramach których przeprowadzona została intensywna akcja uświadamiająca duchowieństwo o znaczeniu synodu w kościele lokalnym. Odbywało się to głównie w cyklu artykułów na łamach „Kroniki Diecezjalnej Przemyskiej”. Oprócz aspektów historycznych informowano duchowieństwo o zagrożeniach modernistycznego podejścia do tej instytucji i wskazywano na rolę biskupa jako ustawodawcy, który jako jedyny na synodzie jest władny stanowić nowe prawo diecezjalne.

W pracach komisji synodalnych przygotowujących statuty synodalne było zaangażowanych wielu duchownych także z kręgów proboszczów i wikariuszy. Ważną rolę odgrywały dyskusje w czasie kongregacji dekanalnych, na których duchowieństwo parafialne mogło zgłaszać swoje postulaty. Udział księży w tych formach przygotowawczych miał dać im poczucie udziału w całości prac i wpływu na powstające regulacje. Właściwy synod w dużej mierze charakter formalno-obrzędowy, zgodny z tradycją kościelną sięgającą okresu potrydenckiego. Znaczna część synodu miała charakter liturgiczny wskutek czego na dyskusję nad statutami zostawało niewiele czasu.

Z tego powodu dwa następne synody z 1908 i 1914 r. miały charakter kongregacji synodalnych, podczas których ograniczono stronę obrzędową, aby więcej czasu wykorzystać na dyskusję. Zmieniały się też jej formy. Zamiast tradycyjnego odczytywania statutów, księża wysłuchiwali odpowiednich wystąpień biskupa i referentów, po których odbywały się dyskusje i formułowano postulaty synodalne. Ta forma najwyraźniej była widoczna podczas synodu z 1914 r.

Efektom obrad synodów były decyzje o charakterze prawnym, ogłaszane mocą władzy biskupiej. Za każdym razem miały one nieco odmienną formę, mimo, że ich podstawę stanowiły statuty. Synod z 1902 r. uchwalił 619 statutów i miały one bardzo tradycyjną formę i układ właściwe dla okresu potrydenckiego. Integralną częścią stanowionego wówczas prawa były instrukcje synodalne dotyczące między innymi takich zagadnień jak: sposób przeprowadzania wizytacji dziekańskiej, czy odbywania kolędy.

Statuty z 1908 i 1914 r. nie znosiły uchwał z 1902 r., ale były ich uzupełnieniem i wyjaśnieniem w oparciu o ocenę skutków ich praktycznego funkcjonowania. Celem zatem było ich doprecyzowanie i uzupełnianie, a nie głębsze zmiany. Akta synodu z 1914 r. różniły się znacznie od poprzednich. Posiadały one formę sprawozdań z kolejnych sesji synodalnych. Wystąpienia biskupa o charakterze ascetycznym przytaczano w nich w streszczeniu, natomiast w całości publikowano teksty referatów problemowych, wygłaszanych przez wyznaczonych księży. Następnie streszczano dyskusję i konkluzję biskupa, po czym zamieszczano tzw. rezolucje synodalne odnoszące się do problemów poruszanych w wystąpieniach. Zawierały one wnioski i zalecenia dotyczące rozwiązywania różnych kwestii, w tym także duszpasterskich.

Zarządzenia synodalne najczęściej powtarzały przepisy Kościoła powszechnego, jedynie aplikując je do lokalnej sytuacji. Dotyczyły one m.in. funkcjonowania instytucji kościelnych, życia kleru i wiernych świeckich, zagadnień dyscyplinarnych, głoszenia słowa bożego, czy katechizacji. Taka treść postanowień synodalnych nawiązywała do wiekowej tradycji Kościoła. Problematyką nową w statutach wszystkich trzech synodów przemyskich była kwestia społeczna. Zagadnienie to znalazło się szerzej w obszarze zainteresowania Kościoła od czasów Leona XIII. Śledząc postanowienia synodów biskupa S. Pelczara możemy zauważyć rozwój rozumienia tych zagadnień w środowisku kleru diecezji przemyskiej. Wskazują na wzrost znaczenia tej problematyki podczas synodów z 1908 i 1914 r. w stosunku do roku 1902.

Słowa kluczowe: synod; diecezja przemyska; biskup Józef Sebastian Pelczar