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Poetic Dwelling in God: A Meditative Journey with Andrzej Wierciński's Homilies

ABSTRACT This article is a conversation with Andrzej Wierciński, a scholar who has influenced my philosophical and theological thinking. Wierciński's books and other writings, embodying his inimitable philosophical-theological hermeneutics, are recognized worldwide as the top of the high-ranking works within the field of philosophical hermeneutics and beyond it. In this intimate dialogue, tuned to the rhythm of the unexpectedness and freshness of the hermeneutic reading, I concentrate on Wierciński's less-known to broader readership writings: His Christmas and Easter messages and unpublished sermons. Thinking with Wierciński, I follow the exegetical path of his meditation on passages from the Holy Scriptures and attempt to understand anew the inexhaustible depths of the mystery of the Incarnation and Salvation. Wierciński's academic and pastoral realms are not separated from one another. The unique alchemy of the tasks ensuing from the intersecting paths of being one of the key thinkers today, an academic, and a minister, gives rise to his one-of-a-kind *oeuvre* that discloses the spiritual power and the subtle, poetic beauty of his hermeneutic reflection on our way *toward* and *with* God.

KEYWORDS: religious faith, inexhaustibility, philosophical hermeneutics, theology, Andrzej Wierciński

Teach me to show your praise, your truth, your will.
Make me preach you without preaching; not by words
but by my example and by the catching force,
the sympathetic influence of what I do –
by my visible resemblance to your saints,
and the evident fullness of the love which my heart
bears for you.

John Henry Newman (1901: 365)

Introduction: Meditating on the Word of God

How can we reach out to God and eternity? How can we live the sacredness of our life? What happens *to* us and *in* us when we contemplate God's Word and follow the ideal of detachment from the earthly, which is, at the same time, the path of perfect attunement to reality as it is? What do we experience if we adopt a contemplative mode of being and make it into our own? The encounter with the unreachable God can occur in and through the meditation of the Scriptures, which opens us to a reality beyond our immediate and everyday experience. To

meditate means to breathe¹ in the infinite, to be *here* and *now* in an openness to the transcendent disclosing itself to us. While we can be perfectly tuned to the rhythm of contemplative life and meditate regularly, preaching the Gospel in the sermon heightens the exigency to respond to the Word of God speaking to us. The homily is a unique space and an opportune time² for both the preacher and the listener/reader to experience the wisdom of God's Word. It is the time of speaking, listening, and discerning; the *καρὸς* of God revealing himself to us and of our individuated human response to the revelation of God (θεοφάνεια: το φαίνεσθαι και το θεαθήναι). The meaning of the Gospel teachings is primarily conveyed in a mediated way through parables that disclose to us Jesus's teaching of the reigning of God (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ). However, evangelizing based on the reading of the Gospel is not to be viewed solely in light of its didactic function.

Meditating on the Word of God, preaching the Gospel, and listening to the homilies interweave with our capability of discernment. Discerning what we genuinely desire makes us vigilant. Being vigilant enables us to deepen self-reflectivity and self-understanding (*Selbstbewegung*) and, thus, invites us to receive and respond to God's grace: "Being vigilant is not about neurotic derangement and panic fear but a humble (*humilis*, χαμαλόζ) and, therefore, prudent (σώφρων, *prudens-providens*, foreseeing) discernment on the way to self-knowledge" (Wierciński 2023c, 266). Discernment is a form of refinement in which we are more sensitive to the ebbs and flows of understanding and its inexhaustible character. By and large, the inexhaustibility of understanding manifests itself in the unhurried unfurling of meaning. The slow unveiling of the intricate nature of reality permits us to intuit better that which is and to find ourselves in situations of not-knowing, amazement, and complexity. When we succumb to the reality of not-knowing and patiently allow for the blossoming of the unexpected, we acknowledge that understanding, on the one hand, will always remain incomplete, but, on the other, it will bring the fruits of our humble appreciation of what we have understood. Understanding, thus, looms large as a tangible, if paradoxical, possibility of the impossible.

The radical change of life (μετάνοια) preached in the Gospel inspires us to think of the event-like nature of the encounter with the Word of God. Following Hans-Georg Gadamer's

¹ It is worthwhile to ponder the etymology of 'inspire' and its significance for our understanding of what happens to us when we meditate the Word of God: "Inspire (v.) ...from Latin *inspirare* 'blow into, breathe upon,' figuratively "inspire, excite, inflame," from in- 'in' (from PIE root **en* "in") + *spirare* 'to breathe' (see spirit (n.)". Online Etymology Dictionary. <https://www.etymonline.com>.

² The opportune time (*kairos*) is a recurring motif in St Paul's teachings, see, e.g., 2 Corinthians 6: 2.

hermeneutics of conversation, we can regard preaching as an event (*Ereignis*) in which the minister and the faithful partake of something that is beyond them (*die Sache selbst*). The preacher and the listener/reader respond to the transcendent, seeing the reality of everydayness through the prism of the eternality of God's words: "the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life" (John 6:36c). The event of preaching is the occurrence of the epiphany (*revelatio*) of God, in which we uncover the inexhaustibility of God's love and are enveloped by divine grace. Listening to the homily, which is a form of religious meditation, is a crucial way of questioning the narrowness and insufficiency of one's own preconceptions and prejudices. It is the opening of "the doors of perception." I use the phrase after William Blake, who speaks of the cleansing of the doors of perception that begets the possibility of seeing the entirety of reality as infinite, and, as a result, of seeing the transcendent among the worldly and the ordinary: "If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, Infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (Blake 2008, 39). The sermon is the epiphanic moment of disclosure in which the Word of God enables the listener to perceive and understand and, consequently, to self-discover. The word preached to the people of faith becomes part of the life of the Church and, thus, is not just a matter of private reflection and piety but *sensus fidei*³—the heart of the lived experience of the faithful.

Meditating on the Word of God is of crucial significance, not just for the religious practice of the faithful but to serve as an inspiration and stimulus for one's development as a human being in a broader sense. It happens also outside the circumscriptions of orthodox religiosity and the Christian Church. God's Word enables us to recognize the pregnant with meaning relationship between dying, which leads to an abundance of living, and painful, irrevocable loss, which results in an ultimate gain: "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt 10:39). The Word of God transcends the deficiencies of our human understanding, which predominantly and typically rests upon a dichotomous way of thinking, and teaches us that for God everything is possible: "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matt 19:26). The meditation of the biblical verses gives us a possibility to remain open to the ongoing process of *trans-formation*, which is always also *self-formation*. Pondering the messages of the Scriptures is a unique form of self-care (*die Sorge*), as the Word of God permeates the human heart and is capable of

³ The idea of *sensus fidei* is developed by Jonh Henry Newman in his "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine" (1962, 53–56).

radically changing it: “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12). The epiphanic power of the Word of God interweaves with its trans-*formative* force.

Furthermore, when we read God’s Word and interpret it, we discover that it is God’s Word reading us and our lives—our aims, desires, and intentions. Ultimately, the compelling force of the Word of God calls on us to con-*vert* (Latin *convertere* “to turn around; to transform”). Religious meditation is, thus, a mode of spiritual discipline in which we are not only moved by the Word of God but summoned to change our lives while pursuing the truth and remaining open to the newness and even shockingness of the Good News. Meditation on God’s Word is a gift of self-reflection, of returning to the same through creative repetition (*Wiederholung*). We can notice that this kind of repetition is constitutive of the Holy Scriptures. The intricate fabric of the Biblical episodes shows the close relationship between the Old and the New Testament: meaningful reiterations, re-occurrences, anticipations, and flashbacks. The four separate Gospels also inspire us to view the same event in the history of salvation not only from a different angle and in a new light but essentially to see the re-articulation of the same as the creative building anew upon that which already exists (*Nachbildung*). To contemplate the Word of God means to read the signs of time and recognize the cultural heritage of Christianity in our lives. Meditating the readings from the Scriptures, we acknowledge the culture that has formed us and the tradition we are (*Tradition, die wir sind*).

Each time we meditate on the Word of God, we re-enter the reality of how it creates meaning for us in the specificity and profundity of our present predicament. The Gospel reflects us; it is not a collection of impressive and provoking episodes but a set of narratives that contain any problem imaginable of a human being struggling to reach out to God; these stories can even perform a cathartic role for us. There is no finite reading of the Scriptures, just like there is no finite reading of human life in its variability, changeability, and conditionality. It takes the hermeneutic ear to hear the inconclusive narrative of the human matter with God. The unique unrepeatability of each human being involves the unrepeatability of human fate in its complexity, beauty, and situatedness. Interpreting the Word of God, the sermon is an inherent re-*reflection* of previous interpretations. Ideally, it is a subtler, more profound, and apter response to God’s call each time. In this sense, meditation is the school of self-reflexive thinking. As William Franke notices: “Self-reflexivity is inherent in the structure of language itself. It is the condition by virtue of which language becomes a means of arresting phenomena and breaking

down their uninterrupted flux into intelligible categories and articulable units. Return to the same or ‘re-flection’—literally ‘folding back’—is necessary in order to mark and identify anything as something” (Franke 2021, 20). *Re-flecting* is a mode of dwelling in God and an invitation for God to dwell in us through his compassionate revelation in his Word. God performs the unveiling of himself in innumerable ways, of which the salvific events of the Incarnation and Resurrection are the axis and the crux.

The Word became flesh and lived amongst us.
(John 1:14)

A leaf of grass is no less than the journey work of the stars.
Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself,” 31

Being Born to Wonder: The Inexhaustibility of *Vita Nuova in and through the Incarnation*

Entrenched in the profound and unexpected sources of philosophizing and following the wisdom of the inner word (*verbum interius*), which is part of Tradition but also transcending what is rigid and scrupulous in tradition, Wierciński’s Christmas messages are intensely beautiful and continually astounding invocations to dwell in the horizon of love—the nourishing, ever-new, refreshing, life-giving, and everlasting enchantment with God and God’s fascination with us. Through his reflection, Wierciński encourages us to deeply experience the grandeur and the impossible possibility of God’s manifesting himself in his Son in the Mystery of the Incarnation. In a quintessential way, the Nativity directs us to the inescapability of the patient unfolding of understanding. To understand that God comes to us as a human, as God-with-us (Emmanuel) situates us in the horizon of ceaseless pondering on the reality that apparently is even beyond pondering:

Understanding is always a matter of pondering upon the complexity of that which needs to be understood. And understanding is not a matter of mere rationalization and comprehension of information but and predominantly a question of grasping the logic of that which only slowly develops in front of us as reality. Mary, a young mother of Jesus, was confronted with the task, which she started to understand only slowly and with great astonishment. Following Mary’s example, we realize the importance of pondering, which involves the whole of a human being: Pondering is not the mere result of an intellectual operation but a matter of the way of being as a human being. This pondering is a real beginning of the long and unending process of understanding. It is a real school of life for every human being. (Wierciński 2017, 1)

Incarnationis Misterium, the Word—*verbum caro*—given to us, radically (re)creates the meaning of newness and liveliness; thus, we can delve into every shade of meaning of the spoken and as-yet-unspoken while we are inhabiting our embodied being, both awaiting and

already having the fullness of life: “I have come that they might have life and that they might have *it* more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Exiled from God, we discern that the body of Christ both shrouds and reveals the Invisible. In its enthralling power of veiling and unveiling the Invisible, the Incarnation is the inexhaustible spring of wonder and the infinite source of God’s generosity that triggers our human capability of wondering:

The astonishment and amazement that accompany our human hearts when we experience the In-carnation of God, confirm the remarkable human dignity and greatness: In our opening to the world in which we live, we develop our ability to be amazed and fascinated by everything known and unknown, familiar and strange, disclosed and concealed. Plato in *Theaetetus* reminds us that wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins with wondering (θαυμάζειν), even though it is more in the sense of perplexity and puzzlement (*Theaetetus* 155c-d, *Meno* 84c). Aristotle insists, in his *Metaphysics*, that wondering is the beginning and principle of philosophy. We are amazed by experiencing the world in its complexity in-between singularity and plurality, similarity and difference, being static and in motion. (Wierciński 2019, 1)⁴

As a boundless wellspring of wonder, the Incarnation is an ever-renewable fount of philosophizing, of going into the depths of wisdom (σοφία). The marveling that envelops the appearance of God in his Son (ἐπιφάνεια): διὰ τῆς ἐπιφανείας τοῦ σωτῆρος (2 Tim 1:10) is philosophizing *par excellence*. Wierciński’s Christmas messages sensitize us to the reality of the Incarnation as an event (*Ereignis*), which stirs our passionate longing for the fulfillment of the impossible, for the enactment (*Vollzug*) of that which lies beyond the horizon of our contingent, impermanent, and provisional existence.

As Wierciński cogently elucidates, the Incarnation not only marks a watershed in the history of humankind but creates for each one of us the possibility of a new life while we are drawing from the depths of the divine power of trans-*formation* and re-*creation* to uncover each time afresh the inexhaustible newness of wonderment: “As a pivotal point in history, Incarnation is a permanent invitation to conversion and communion with God. In this respect, it marks a new beginning and transforms the meaning of newness. Each time a human being meets God, it is a new beginning since it expresses the human answer to God’s continual invitation to live with him” (Wierciński 2023c, 261). The new beginning (*ein neuer Anfang*) that is given to us in the Word that becomes flesh is the most precious gift, beyond everything else and incomparable to anything else, surpassing what we expect and transcending what we recognize and value as significant and worth pursuing in our daily lives. It is the true treasure, the symbolic pearl—rare, pure, and desirable—found by a merchant in the Gospel: “When he

⁴ The exquisite beauty of pondering is also powerfully rendered in Wierciński’s (2016) Christmas message.

had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it” (Matt 13:46). Nothing else can satisfy our longings, and nothing else can quench our hunger for love and fulfillment ever since the encounter with the Word that became flesh.

God’s concomitant and bewildering gentleness and powerfulness arouse our capacity for marveling. It is precisely our being in awe that enables us to cross the boundary and near the inaccessible God. Our human capability of admiring and contemplating is the *spiritus movens* of apprehending the truth of Revelation; God himself is *locus revelationis* (Wierciński 2023c, 263). The wondrous event of the birth of Christ as a historical happening and as an event repeating itself when we celebrate Christmas prompts us to realize that being and wonder belong together. Wierciński emphasizes that the beauty of our re-living of the Incarnation lies in following Joseph and Mary in their astonishment but also in their full involvement with the unthinkable: “Joseph and Mary are truly on the way to grasping the meaning of great things, which causes them to get engaged with something absolutely unimaginable, an impossibility, which becomes possible” (Wierciński 2016, 1). In the uncanny proximity of our comprehending of the incomprehensible—God becoming human—the divine and the human remain in a loving embrace. And thus, we can unravel and delight in what is amazing and continually incites admiration in our covenant with God. The inexhaustible nature of the gift imparted on us in the deepest recesses of our minds and hearts in the Word becoming flesh is a reminder that our existence is *existentia hermeneutica*, in which the inexhaustibility of love both equates with the inexhaustibility of understanding and unwaveringly calls on us to pursue understanding. On nearing the truth of the Incarnation, we are urged to discover love dwelling in us and to act in concord with the law of love: “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor 5:14).

Our human capacity for wondering empowers us to abandon the constraints of calculative thinking (*das rechnende Denken*)⁵ and wisely choose a pathway beyond the confines of mercantile and purely purpose-oriented thinking and doing. This uniquely human capability gives birth to a genuine belonging together of reflection and action. With the spirit of

⁵ Martin Heidegger’s differentiation between calculative and contemplative thinking comes as an invaluable help in discerning the true power of meditation in our lives: “Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next. Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself. Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is. There are, then, two kinds of thinking, each justified and needed in its own way: calculative thinking (*das rechnende Denken*) and meditative thinking (*das besinnliche Nachdenken*). This meditative thinking is what we have in mind when we say that contemporary man is in flight-from thinking” (Heidegger 1966, 46).

amazement, we can recognize and interpret the signs of divinity (*vestigia Dei*) in our lives and attune our hearts to God's love:

One of the most crucial experiences is the ability to wonder (θαυμάζω), which inspires us in the true sense of filling us with the spirit of amazement and admiration. This new beginning of our love with God is the deepest desire of the human heart, which does not calculate and decide what serves specific purposes. To begin afresh means to work out many new and always different possibilities to develop as a human being every time in this unique relationship. (Wierciński 2023c, 261–262)

The new beginning is a through-and-through awakening; ever since this momentous turn (*Kehre*), nothing is truly the same, while apparently, there is no change in sight. The inexhaustibility of love speaks to our capability of searching and finding—the journey toward God is, at the same time, the opportune moment (*Augenblick*) of seeing God.⁶ Wierciński reminds us that the moment of encountering God—the fruit of the Incarnation—is the moment of the loving communion with God: “The journey toward union with God, when the experience of awakening and rejoicing in the presence of the Lord is the way (μέθοδος) toward and with God, and thus, the art of love” (Wierciński 2023c, 262). The inexhaustibility of love becomes the school of love (*ars amatoria*) due to its overwhelming force (*amor vincit omnia*) in the intimate relationship between the divine and the human and between human and human, in which grace awakens love (*lux et amor*).

The New Life that is given to us *in* and *through* the Incarnation, as Wierciński elucidates, enables us to be good shepherds, not only spreading the Good News of Nativity but caring for those who are in need: “Illumined by the face of the incarnate God, despite the terrifying outbreaks of violence on a massive scale, we might walk in his presence with our heads held high in solidarity with all those who look for a physical or spiritual shelter” (Wierciński 2017, 2). The new beginning, granted to us as a gift of faith, begets the spirit of unity and solidarization.⁷ We are no longer able to be lured in or let the darkness of wickedness and abuse dominate our reality. Instead, the new sense of oneness with oneself and the Other shines forth as the *bona fide* possibility of a fulfilling life in our sincere and generous being with God and with others. After Paul Ricoeur, we can say that this new reality is a state of generosity and dynamic benevolence, grounded in the beauty and challenge of communal life:

⁶ To express the idea of the mystical encounter between the infiniteness of God and the finitude of the human being, Meister Eckhart uses the notion of *ground*: “He who is nameless, who is a denial of all names and never had a name, wherefore the prophet said, ‘Truly thou art a hidden God’ (Isa 45:15), in the ground of the soul where God’s ground and the soul’s ground are one ground” (Meister Eckhart 2007, 237). Remarkably, the hiddenness of God overlaps, in an unexplainable way, with his self-manifesting to the human soul.

⁷ A slightly different, though complementary, aspect of solidarity in the Incarnation is commented upon in Golden and McConnell (1986, 188): “The Incarnation was “the paradigmatic act of solidarity ... total identification with the human condition, total solidarity with human history.”

“a good life, with and for others, within just institutions” (Ricoeur 1992, 172). The radical change in viewing the Other in his/her otherness and the possibility of love, respect, and cooperation are the fruits of the loving relationship with God: “This new beginning is the *communio*, an ἐκκλησία of people loving each other because God loved us first (1 John 4:19: Ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν, ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς). Therefore, the human response is summarized in letting God love us (*Liebenlassen*)” (Wierciński 2023c, 263). We are not capable of loving the Other unless we experience the truth of the words that God loved us first and not only loved us but gave himself as the sacrifice of love on the Cross.

The event of the Incarnation, beginning with the biblical scene of the Annunciation, is the act in which the inconceivable becomes the feasible reality of Mary surrendering to the radicality of the unbelievable. The adjective *in-conceivable* not only perfectly renders human incomprehensibility of God’s ways but speaks to the heart of God’s manifestation in the flesh (1 Tim 3:16; Heb 10:5), whence God is *conceived* in Mary’s human body. Only through Mary’s love in her yielding to God’s love can we experience the new starting point that originates in love, breeds love, makes us dwell in love, and has its τέλος in love: “The Incarnation (John 1:14: ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, *Verbum caro factum est*) is such a new starting-point, which infuses in us a passion for the possible event lying beyond human impossibility” (Wierciński 2019b, 1). In the *Incorporatio* (Heb 10:5), alongside with Mary, we can experience the unspeakable serenity of opening ourselves to the Beloved, of succumbing to love.⁸

The unveiling of the Incarnation of God is the self-emptying of Christ, and it is *through* and *in* the surrendering of His self that Christ loves us: “As *locus revelationis*, the Incarnated unveils what God does in and through him for us and, thus, for our salvation. The unveiling is the self-emptying (κένωσις) of Jesus, which is also his glorification (*Herrlichkeit des Verherrlichten*), in which God is glorified. The Incarnated glorifies God by having a clear image of God and sharing this image with us” (Wierciński 2023c, 264). Christ’s “kenotic obedience” (Wierciński 2019a, 181) initiates the fulfillment of God’s will to save humankind. It brings his will to full completion in the intimate unity of the three Persons of the Trinity. The third person

⁸ Hans Urs von Balthasar offers a thorough explication of the ‘serene surrendering’—*Gelassenheit*—in “The Serenity of the Surrendered Self.” In this essay, we also find an apt definition of *Gelassenheit*, in a footnote provided by Adrian Walker, the translator: “The serenity of the surrendered self” (and variations thereof) is meant to render the difficult-to-translate German word *Gelassenheit*, which in everyday speech means something like “relaxed serenity” and in the mystical literature means something like “the state of having left one’s self” (Balthasar 2022, 9).

of the triune God bestows upon us spiritual wisdom and guides us to discern God's self-manifestation in the epiphanic mystery of the Incarnation, God's Passion and Resurrection:

The complexity of the life of the Incarnated God is a revelation of the Trinity under the particular aspect of kenotic obedience. The hermeneutic circle seems clear: The privileged access to the mystery of the Trinity is the mystery of the Incarnated God. However, thinking the mystery of the Trinity is, in turn, the condition of the possibility of thinking the supreme expression of God's kenotic self-manifestation in the Incarnation and, finally, in the event of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. (Wierciński 2019a, 181)

The act of Christ's self-emptying (Phil 2:7) initiates the possibility of living a close relationship with God.

This closeness is the fruit of Mary's *fiat*, her humble consent to God's will, which was written down by the Evangelist. Her momentous "let it be done" radically redefines her life and fundamentally changes our lives. There is no more profound closeness between God and us than God becoming like us in everything but for sin (Heb 4:15). In the history of salvation, the two *fiats*; of God's Mother to give life to Jesus, and Jesus's, God's and Mary's son, to fulfill the will of the Father, belong together in bringing us humans the hope of a new life, governed by the "divine logic of love:"

Mary's gentle "let it be done" (*γένοιτό, fiat*, Luke 1:38) and Jesus's loud acclamation "it is accomplished!" (*τετέλεσται, consummatum est*, John 19:30) show, in different ways of expression, the importance of trust in the divine logic of love. It might be, or it will be, different from what we might have planned and expected, but the trust in God's plan transgresses every human doubt and uncertainty. (Wierciński 2021, 4)

God's Beloved Son asks in the garden of Gethsemane to be spared the passion that precedes his final announcement of accomplishing the Father's will. Mary's gentleness, prayerfulness, and surrender are followed by Jesus's passionate prayer that will lead via the Cross to the ultimate victory on the morning of Resurrection.

The blessing of the morning light to you,
may it find you even in your invisible
appearances, may you be seen to have risen
from some other place you know and have known
in the darkness and that that carries all you need.

David Whyte (2018)

"Behold, the Lamb of God": The *Here and Now* of *Mysterium Paschale*—the Inexhaustible Spring of Life

Our ever-present awareness of mortality does not cease to make us seek an answer to the perennial quandary of dying and *passing over* to eternity. Fulfillment and void, being and nothingness, fullness and scarcity, remain with us throughout our lives while we continually long for completion and happiness, sensing that we are exiled from *home*. The indissoluble connection between life and death, which breeds philosophical thought and permeates religious writings, reveals the indescribable magnificence of human existence and the unflagging quest to understand our present, past, and the future. In the Christian faith, the mystery of our death interweaves with the mystery of the Cross and Resurrection. This truth is the crux of the happenings of the Easter tide. In his Easter messages, Wierciński reminds us that, recurring year by year, Easter is not just one more expression of the human need for festivity but is an ever-renewing opening for us to relive the mystery of Pascha each time we celebrate it: “*Mysterium paschale* as an historico-salvific event is happening here and now” (Wierciński 2023a, 5). Preaching this truth about our celebration of the salvific event of God’s Resurrection, he guides us to recognize the kairological aspect of Easter, and, after St Paul, encourages us to fully dwell in the *opportune moment* (καιρός): “Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). The Now (*Augenblick*), imbued with the message of salvation, not only commemorates but is the outer expression of our inner living out the message of salvation. The Paulinian teaching directs us to the fullness of time (πλήρωμα), which becomes reachable to us through Jesus’s sacrifice: “In whom [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; ... That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him” (Eph 1:7.10).

To help us on our way to dwelling in the *present* time of salvation—Christ’s passion, agony, and Resurrection—Wierciński prompts us to meditate on it via our entering into an aesthetic experience of contemplating art that represents the events of *Passio Christi*. Significantly, Wierciński’s use of references to works of art in his messages is not dictated by the attempt to embellish them with eye-catching instances of religious art or to impress us with his knowledge of the history of art. The disclosure of truth in the work of art necessitates him and, followingly, us as readers to reach out to the artistic evocation of Christ’s passion. The truth, revealing itself in works of art, illumines our pathway of understanding. The use of

another medium of expression (art)⁹ or discourse (poetic condensation) helps us deepen our reflection, also the religious one. Treating us, in the Easter message (Wierciński 2022a), to a meticulously rich exegesis of Caravaggio's masterpiece, *The Taking of Jesus*, Wierciński invites us to enter the contemplative space of facing the infinite immediacy of the moment (*Augenblick*) of self-understanding (*Selbstbewegung*) and recognizing ourselves in the complex reality of the *event* (*Ereignis*) captured in the painting. This *event*-like encounter with art—the *here* and *now* of (re)living that which we watch—becomes the sacrament of faith and the unique opportunity to make an understanding of the ineffable depths of Christ's passion shine forth for us: "Caravaggio encourages us to read Gospel as if the biblical story was unfolding in front of our very eyes, nobody can dive for us into the fathomless depth of the salvific mystery and experience for us the pain of the Crucifixion and the joy of Resurrection" (Wierciński 2022a, 6).

Following Gadamer's precept of the *eventing* of art (cf. e.g., Gadamer 2007, 215)—our active participation in the being of an artwork (*participatio actuosa*)—Wierciński guides us to partake of the sensitive, *com-passionate* interiority of ourselves, illuminated by what we see and understand. In the meditative attentiveness to the stark realism of the act of treachery embodied in *The Taking of Christ*, we shrink with the dread of recognizing the deep psychology of committing a sin.¹⁰ Caravaggio's Judas represents the hidden depths of human prevarication and its inescapable aftermath. The pervasive contradictoriness of concomitant emotions—the intensely felt harm because of intentional iniquity and the befuddlement with one's potential for evil and its outcome—conveys the inmost and tragic reality of wrongdoing: "Judas's face with deep frown forehead wrinkles as he looks enigmatically ahead indicates the tension of contradictory emotions, from sadness and worries to confusion and bewilderment. It might express the bafflement and incomprehension of the result of his betrayal" (Wierciński 2022a, 2). Drawing our attention to the behavior and countenance of various individuals that inhabit his canvas, Caravaggio not only brings forth the interminable struggle of good and evil, life and death, maliciousness and innocence, but uses the language of art—his famous technique of

⁹ An original approach to the relevance of beauty in religious life is represented by Hans Urs von Balthasar, who claims that in contemporary world, often devoid of religious faith, it is beauty rather than the two other transcendentals: truth and goodness, which is the portal to the renewal of faith. Cf. Balthasar (1983).

¹⁰ I elaborate on the psychological aspect of the dreadfulness of sin in "*Via Pulchritudinis: The Narrative of Violence and Vulnerability in Painting in View of Hans-Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutic Aesthetics*" (2023). Discussing two famous examples of religious art that masterfully capture the complex reality of human depravity: Bosch's *Christ Mocked*, and Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes*, I point to the human predicament of fallenness, in which the awareness of committing sin and the puzzlement at one's degradation coexist (Holda 2023, 168–171).

chiaroscuro—to convey the intimate subtlety of the invisibly *Present*, juxtaposed against nothingness.

Encouraged by Wierciński to participate in the disclosure of truth in an aesthetic encounter, we can discern the momentous importance of Christ’s passionate suffering. Christ’s face illuminated by light, frowning forehead, and lowered eyes are the quintessence of the overwhelming, permeating Presence. His downcast look draws us in, and the gripping force of love that surrenders and lets itself be crucified does not cease to disturb, question, perplex, and induce pain and compassion. The picture’s masterful configuration of all the faces expresses the unspeakable drama of betrayal. The Saviour’s “painful forbearance,” “resignation,” and “restraint” are astoundingly contrasted with the cry of horror and fright depicted on the face of the Apostle, whose hair touches Christ’s. The Apostle’s face, most probably St John’s, Christ’s beloved disciple that we see from the side view, makes us fully dwell in the dismay and dreadfulness of the abominable act of the taking of Christ. John’s turmoil contrasts sharply with Judas’s cold and wretched demeanor. However, even more vividly, the apprehension and panic in John’s face clash with Jesus’s serenity and restraint. The intimate closeness of the relationship between the teacher and his disciple makes us see John as Christ’s *alter ego*, expressing what Jesus subdues.

Emphasizing the performative aspect of art, Wierciński leads us to walk the path of self-actualization, to renew our vision, and to intuit the hidden depths of our souls:

The faces of the soldiers are virtually unrecognizable. Caravaggio persuasively conveys their heartlessness and cruelty by overemphasizing the importance of the perfectly shining metal-clad arm that might serve as a mirror for future viewers ... the drama of the betrayal and the following Crucifixion cannot be separated from the importance of our looking into ourselves in the canvas’s mirror and discerning the meaning of our own lives. (Wierciński 2022a, 3)

An aesthetic experience of contemplating *The Taking of Christ* draws us into the *here and now* of Christ’s Passion and Resurrection. When we meditate on the events of the Paschal Mystery, not only do we feel compassion for the Son of God, suffering and carrying our wounds, but we attempt to apprehend the solemnity and gravity of the events of the Triduum. We marvel at the glory of the risen Christ, but we touchingly and cathartically enter our own experience of salvation. Permeated by God’s grace that comes *in* and *through* the Easter events, we can fully experience the holy power of the celebration of Pascha, the true joy of Resurrection (*omnia gaudia paschalia*). This cannot happen otherwise than by seeing and believing that the actual happening of Easter is not a mere memorializing of the past events but a thoughtful and heart-felt allowing of ourselves to receive, respond, and re-experience those events. What guides us

in our response is the *καιρός* of Redemption, the opportune moment of living out the salvific message.

St Paul's teaching of salvation as happening *Now* (2 Cor 5:20 – 6:2)—as though no other time were to be given to us—expresses the truth about the immediacy and ultimate significance of the moment of deliverance. The *Now* bespeaks the heart of the Paschal Mystery, the sacrament of our perpetual conversion, in which we can participate because of the love of God Father, sacrificing his Son:

The Easter Triduum is not a preparation for celebrating Easter but is the celebration itself. We rediscover the meaning of these days and rethink our lives in light of these events. However, we do it only when we *think*. This is *καιρός* of conversion: *Augenblick* is always here, and now, it is a look (*Blick*) toward God who is love. Resurrection is the final expression of the Father's love. (Wierciński 2023a, 3)

Nothing can replace this love, and no love can be as close and fulfilling as the love of the Incarnate God who carries and draws to himself our human brokenness in his own Mystical Body on the Cross: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5).¹¹ The crux of the religious celebration of Easter is, therefore, the call on us to restore our capacity for seeing that which is the foundation of our faith and our lives. Meditating on Christ's compassionate humbling himself in the event of the Last Supper—in the washing of the disciples' feet and the chaste simplicity of sharing bread—Wierciński sensitizes us to the reality of *proper* seeing. Abandoned, bereaved, naked, and dispossessed, we are still divinely predisposed and empowered *in* and *through* Christ to develop the capacity of seeing that which is our rescue and our cure—the body of Christ: “This is a matter concerning the cultivation of our senses in order to be able to lose sight of the unimportant and build the genuine capacity of seeing (i.e., this bread is my body). And this capacity is nothing less than the real preparation for faith (*praeambula fidei*) and the expression of it” (Wierciński 2021, 2).

Our personal experience of salvation is the continuous happening of being sustained and protected *through* and *in* the body of Christ (*Corpus Christi*)—this bread is giving life and is life itself. Our hardships, traumas, weaknesses, and foibles testify to our vulnerability and woundedness. In his Easter messages, Wierciński underlines the exigency of enduring in the face of life demands and challenges. The salvific message of Easter comes as a true and never-ending source of experiencing the fullness of life, despite our darkneses and insufficiencies:

¹¹ In greater depth, I explore the meaning of the sacrificial and redeeming power of Christ's passion, resorting to art, in my paper, “*Via Pulchritudinis: The Narrative of Violence and Vulnerability in Painting in View of Hans-Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutic Aesthetics*” (2023).

“To endure means to remain under the challenges of life. This remaining (μένω) is not a matter of simple sustaining but being rooted and connected with the source of life. Life ends in the perfection of God’s love. This is the Resurrection to eternal life” (Wierciński 2023a, 4). Our rootedness in and connectedness with the source of life enables us to see what is truly vital, to see *properly*.¹² As finite and wounded beings, we are on a flight from the core of the healing and liberating path. Through Christ’s passion and the victory of the Cross, we can regain our original capability of seeing and being in oneness with the eternity of our lives.

Wierciński’s Easter messages invite us to deeply realize that our way of seeing is imperfect and incomplete. Easter is the *kairological* time, when our vision and understanding not only awaken but happen with tremendous intensity. The speculative nature of our way with God lies in our human condition (*conditio humana*). Our provisional, incomplete, and finite way of being-in-the-world precludes us from understanding God’s infinity and calls on us to seek an answer (at times even desperately) to the unquenchable longing for the eternal, ingrained deeply in our hearts.¹³ In the fulfillment of this longing, in our passing-over to eternity, we will attain the fullness of seeing and comprehending: “When St Paul says, ‘For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face’ (1 Cor 13:12), ‘*per speculum*’ refers to God’s incomprehensibility, ‘*in aenigmate*’ to his ineffability. The full sight is seeing face to face in faith” (Wierciński 2021, 2). Seeing God face to face is preceded by the gradual process of unveiling the mysterious sacredness of our interior world in the concreteness of everydayness.¹⁴

The new seeing does not happen *without* the actuality of our bodily and material being, in the abstractness and detachment from our lived experience, but *within* our corporeal tangibility of being alive and in the midst of our life stories unfolding moment by moment.¹⁵

¹² Seeing as “a matter of learning, interpreting, and discerning” is also aptly illustrated in Wierciński (2022c, 2). Another instance of Wierciński’s superb gloss on seeing is offered in his sermon: “The Irony of Success: The Seeming Praise of Wretchedness” (2022b), where he resorts to the poem *Be Thou My Vision* (based on *Rop tú mo Baile*, and attributed to St. Dallán Forgaill (the sixth-century poet).

¹³ The gift of our longing to abide in God can be elaborated upon thus: “That’s the dilemma of the seeker, that God touches us with the desire by our own powers, we’re powerless to consummate, which then deepens our radical dependency on God, turning to God. And that’s the path. So, the whole path of the mystics is the path that leads us along that consummation of unconsummated longings” (Finley 2020a, 9).

¹⁴ This truth has been elaborated cogently by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. He expresses the interconnection between our finitude and God’s offering himself to us as an ever-enticing unveiling of himself thus: “For us God is eternal discovery and eternal growth. The more we think we understand God, the more God reveals Himself as otherwise. The more we think we hold God, the further God withdraws, drawing us into the depths of Himself” (Teilhard de Chardin 1960, 119).

¹⁵ The interweaving of the transcendent and the everyday has been elaborated cogently by Thomas Merton, who urges us to see properly and to abandon the false idea of a contemplative life as a possibility of disengaging ourselves from the pains and joys of our dailiness: “Meditation has no point and no reality unless it is firmly rooted

The *hinc et nunc* of the Paschal Mystery happens in our daily struggles and is profoundly embedded in the quotidian of our bodily being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*). Salvation is not just a dogmatic but a living truth, permeating our entire being, actions, and decisions. On the way to an understanding of the meaning of Christ's *Pascha* and also our *Pascha*, we are invited to not merely follow a set of religious doctrines, which would methodologically provide us with a ready answer to how to comprehend the incomprehensible reality of God's suffering and dying in his Son. Instead, we are invited to see the individuality and concreteness of our lives at a given moment (*Augenblick*) as the true stage of the drama of the Triduum events. Salvation happens in the tangible reality of our lives, instantaneously calling on us to see that God's Redemption embraces that which is greater than the definite particularity of our existential journey.

Salvation is all-permeating and all-inclusive—it is the visible sign¹⁶ of the invisibility of God's providential plan that calls on us to be hermeneutically unraveled in our continuous and ever-new awakenings to the inexplicable mysteriousness of God. Our personal path of salvation is part of a more significant Event of the redeeming power of God that pervades everything that is:

All worldly concerns (*contemptus mundi*) are the condition of the *theatrum mundi*, which has its own logic. Trusting God's magnificent plan without concentrating overly on the human individual and concrete elements that might not be fitting for the divine architecture is the hermeneutic key to understanding the importance of divine grace and release (*Gelassenheit*) in our personal history of salvation. (Wierciński 2021, 3)

To be able to see God face to face, “to cross the threshold of mediation” (Wierciński 2023a, 4), we need to embark on a lifelong journey of being humbled by the Unknown. We need to consent to not knowing, to the patient ripening in faith that finally becomes a certitude.

The Courage to Remain Humble in the Face of the Inexhaustible

When we agree to not knowing, we exercise humility. Falling in love with the Scriptures and meditating on the Word of God, we can fully partake of the inexhaustibility of the Word and

in life. Without such roots, it can produce nothing but the ashen fruits of disgust, acedia, and even morbid and degenerate introversion” (Merton 2009, 15).

¹⁶ Christ talks about his forthcoming death and Resurrection, using the Old Testament story of Jonah (Matt 12:39, 16:4; Luke 11:29). Jonah, the prophet, is swallowed by a whale and spit out on the shore, which is a metaphor for death and rebirth, also for our death and rebirth. The mystery of descending and ascending is the pervasive pattern of our transformation. The imagery Christ draws upon has become the source of unflagging inspiration for Christian mystics. One of the well-known, contemporary examples of recycling the motif is Thomas Merton's *The Sign of Jonah* (1953).

experience a radical change in our lives. To respond to the Word of God in an engaging way means that we neither adopt the stance of domination nor claim that our interpretation is the only right one. Rather than disregarding, disavowing, or even condemning other interpretations, we remain continually open to what the Word of God says to us at each particular moment of approaching it. The beauty and power of meditating on the Word of God lies in the inexhaustible possibilities to understand it. God's words always issue an invitation and await our answer. The inexhaustibility of interpretation intricately interweaves with the inexhaustibility of understanding, so powerfully expressed by Gadamer, who claims that whenever we understand, if we understand at all, we understand differently (*Wir verstehen immer anders wenn wir überhaupt verstehen*—Gadamer 2000, 296). The practice of meditating the word of God sensitizes us to the truth that the possibilities of interpretation can never be exhausted as in our reading of the Scriptures, the Word of God is reading our lives, whose complexities, unexpected twists, and turns generate endless interpretative frameworks and configurations for God's words to be operative in.

Walking the path of meditation—*via contemplativa*—is following the trajectory of unknowing (see: *The Cloud of Unknowing*) and humility. Being humble means to be close to the ground ('to humble' comes from the Latin *humus*—ground¹⁷). Lowliness does not mean that our potential is diminished or devalued. Just on the contrary, being modest is the most magnificent and practical gift, ingrained in the unique unrepeatability of each one of us. It is soul-awakening as it predisposes us to dwell in God and to invite God to dwell in us. In the Biblical metaphorical image of the vine and branches, Christ calls on us to remain in him. It is only *through* and *in* our remaining in the love of God that we can transcend our limitations and weaknesses: "If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15: 5). It is not our willpower but the loving surrendering to God that truly empowers us to fulfill his will and to have our lives fulfilled. Opening us to the power that flows from above, our communion with God is the genuine space of transformation, which is realized not that much because of our labor but because of our rootedness in Christ:

Jesus's request, "Remain in me, as I also remain in you" (μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί καὶ γὼ ἐν ὑμῖν) takes the form of a command. This invitation is an imperative to abide in Jesus. It is a call to make a conscious effort to stay rooted in Jesus. Since he is unmistakably specific about addressing the relationship between him and a human being, it is essential for a comm-*union* to happen that all those who are involved be fully present in a constructive and creative engagement with each other. (Wierciński 2018a, 2)

¹⁷ Humble: "... from Old French humble, umble, earlier umele, from Latin humilis 'lowly, humble,' literally 'on the ground,' from humus "earth" (from PIE root *dhghem- 'earth')." <https://www.etymonline.com/word/Humble>. Accessed August 14, 2023.

When we acknowledge that our strength is entrenched in powerlessness,¹⁸ the course of our thinking and acting changes. Despite our weaknesses, we are genuinely empowered to take an oath of allegiance to God anew and as if for the first time. The awareness of humility directs us to the resourcefulness and inexhaustibility of what is beyond us. We sense and recognize the reality of the inexhaustible in the perplexity of our hearts, burdened with weaknesses, groping in the dark night of our souls,¹⁹ descending into the inferno of sin, and ascending to the light of grace.

Any situation of existential crisis bears witness to our humility. Humiliated by the outside and inside circumstances, we strive to understand our predicament while reaching out to the inexhaustible wealth of the divine. Hermeneutically speaking, the inexhaustibility of the divine, the infinite generosity of God manifesting himself in the Word becoming flesh calls on us to explore the universal nature of inexhaustibility and to ponder the issue of the inexhaustibility of the interpretation of God’s Word and understanding. The inexhaustibility of interpretation is not predicated on unplanned elusiveness or strategic vagueness or, on the contrary, on a disciplined use of ambiguity. Rather, it arises from the conversational character of our being as human beings—“the conversation that we are” (cf. Gadamer 2000, 378), and the revelatory and transformational nature of the dialogue the speaking partners are engaged in:

By thinking language as starting out with the *λόγος*, Gadamer elucidates the experience of the inexhaustibility of the meaning that makes a real conversation possible. It is not the rationally desired unambiguousness of our designations and concepts, but the encounter with the other in what is linguistically shared and the experience of enrichment due to such an encounter represent his central concern. (Wierciński 2019b, 82)

The mutuality of continual enrichment, the beauty of the unexpected, and the mystery, but also the poignancy of the unspoken that we experience in conversation bespeaks the awesomeness of the inexhaustibility of meaning. God’s self-manifestation in the Word encourages us to use the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures (*fons sapientiae, verbum Dei*) to interrogate the intricate nature of the inexhaustibility of understanding.

¹⁸ St. Paul’s seminal words: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9) draw our attention to the surprising possibility of strength residing in weakness.

¹⁹ Cf. St John of the Cross (2019). See, also, Finley (2017). In his illuminating commentary, Finley meditates on the inner workings of the soul experiencing the dark night thus: “In the ‘dark night of the soul,’ we are weaned away from the ego’s finite ideas and feelings about God. We come to know that no idea about God is God. We are also weaned from our ideas about our self as being a finite, separate self apart from God.”

One of the finest embodiments of the inexhaustibility of understanding is the Biblical story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, which takes the (in)exhaustibility of material resources as its pivotal point. Significantly, evoking the inexhaustibility of the divine *explicite*, this biblical passage invokes the inexhaustible nature of meditating on God's words *implicite*. The dialectic of (in)exhaustibility and exhaustibility in the imagery of shortage and abundance of earthly resources brings us to a deeper, immaterial level of comprehending inexhaustibility—the inexhaustibility of understanding and love. The encounter between the prophet Elijah and the widow of Zarephath and their experience of the literal lack of food to sustain their lives reveals something vital about the inexhaustibility of understanding. In the time of drought, Elijah is guarded and guided by God's providential care. Ravens save his life by bringing him bread and meat to eat (1 Kings 17:6–7). Eventually, upon God's decision, the prophet finds a temporary dwelling place at the widow of Zarephath. Suffering from starvation herself and living on the very little that is left, she is asked by the prophet to prepare food for him. The ultimate reversal of the expected roles they play gives rise to thinking. In times of natural calamity, when people crave water and food, the poor female is asked to share her meager portion of food with him instead of the prophet performing an instant miracle. The widow is not just poverty-stricken; she suffers from being bereaved and knows self-sufficiency's challenge, gravity, and acuteness. Desperately clinging to what is still available, the woman knows the seriousness of her predicament—she will soon die: “Behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die” (1 Kings 17:12). Embodying the human struggle to survive, this scene sketches the drama of an emotional crisis, a situation of no real deliverance, the immensity of fear, and the abysmal depth of abandonment.

On a deeper level, the story of the widow of Zarephath indicates the unexplainable and unforeseeable power of the inexhaustibility of the divine, directing us, at the same time, to the phenomenon of the inexhaustibility of understanding. God's intervention and guidance, but even more crucially, the most astounding configuration of those who are to meet and cooperate in a time of crisis, call for interpretation. The crux of the paradoxical nature of the story lies in the somewhat atypical choice of people to interact with. The impoverished but also emotionally and spiritually dispossessed widow is about to collaborate with a stranger—the prophet, an actual seer abounding in wisdom, sent and protected by God. This formidable duet will live out God's promise and is not disappointed (*Est enim exorabilis Deus, gratifican vult hominibus, aperte pollicitus, sua se munera large copioseque petentibus daturum*—Leo XIII 1888, 330).

The metaphorical image of the inexhaustibility of material resources, which is the outcome of being faithful to the covenant with God: “For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth” (1 Kings 17:11), evokes the reality of the inexhaustibility of understanding not only because the inconceivable becomes possible, but because the situation overturns the patterned, controlled way of thinking and demands an *unlearning* of an accustomed, or even fossilized understanding. The widow comes to a liminal place in her existence, and this edge space is the fountain of a radical newness—the revelation of the limitlessness of understanding that recalibrates her faith experience.

The story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath is an enticing invitation to let go of the conventional understanding of the dialectic of fullness and scarcity, to enter the unknown space of understanding, and to live by the inexhaustibility of interpretation and understanding. Through Elijah, God subverts the validity of the cause-and-effect paradigm and coerces us to go beyond the visible, beyond the foreseeable logic of shortage, demise, and death, and to disbelieve it. Instead, the exhausted and the exhaustible get *re-viewed*—God’s intervention meets up with human humility in allowing his infinite generosity to flash forth. The infinity of God relishes in giving itself to us. The substantiality of what God is offering combats the emptiness of our souls in absence of God. It reminds us that only love is real and that it combats the shadows of the real—our worries and weaknesses.²⁰ The inexhaustibility of understanding and the inexhaustibility of love interpenetrate. In the humbleness of our hearts, we discover the call to follow the pathway of contemplation (*contemplare* contains as its root the word *templum* that indicates presaging the invisible),²¹ which is, at the same time, the path of inexhaustibility. Nothing is too little while we are on our way *to* and *with* God, and everything can be the spring of exercising attentiveness and love, of our being vividly alive.

Calling to the mind the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, a perfect example of a narrative embodying God’s surprising economy of abundance, helps us grasp the crux of Wierciński’s homilies and facilitates our understanding of their inimitable character. God does

²⁰ Investigating the intersections between psychotherapy and Christian mystics, in his meditation on the mysticism of Teresa of Avila, James Finley (2020a, 12) makes an important comment on love as the only real force of letting go of the traumatized past and starting anew: “But unless I risk it again, the internalized trauma and abandonment has the final say, practically, not ultimately. Only love has the final say.”

²¹ To contemplate: “borrowed from Latin *contemplātus*, past participle of *contemplāre*, *contemplārī* “to look at fixedly, observe, notice, ponder,” from *con-* CON- + *-templāre*, *-templārī*, verbal derivative of *templum* “space of sky or land delimited orally by an augur, sacred precinct, building consecrated to a deity.” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contemplate>. Accessed July 8, 2023.

not change the widow of Zarephath's circumstances abruptly and magically. Rather, he calls her to face her reality, uses the little that she has to sustain her life and make her grow in faith. Wierciński's homilies call on us to meet the Word of God the way we are here and now, both in our deficiencies and what we have, without looking back or entertaining an airy-fairy. We are confronted with the interpretation that demands us to work through it without any hesitation or reluctance. It is precisely this urgency that is so striking: No promise of award but the request that becomes a command for thinking and response. What is important is happening now: Now is the time of salvation. We are encouraged to draw out of the spring of God's wisdom without worrying about exhausting anything, in the manner so potently expressed by St Ephrem: "Be glad then that you are overwhelmed, and do not be saddened because he has overcome you. A thirsty man is happy when he is drinking, and he is not depressed because he cannot exhaust the spring. ... What you have received and attained is your present share, while what is left will be your heritage. For what you could not take at one time because of your weakness, you will be able to grasp at another if you only persevere" (St Ephrem). Invited to drink the spiritual water of God's wisdom in Wierciński's homilies, I was not only engrossed but subtly and powerfully summoned to respond to God's calling me by my name in the challenge of my life circumstances. Being overwhelmed by God's love, preached with such certitude and charisma, I took to my heart the truth that was being revealed to me, trusting it would expand and blossom in the sanctuary of my soul.

In Lieu of Conclusion

God's intervention happens *in* and *through* words. In the most profound way, God comes to us in Jesus, the Word that has become flesh. God comes to us in the words of revelation—in language, its power and powerlessness. Transcendent God, both hidden and revealed in the beauty of nature, is also, in the most subtle, enthralling, and gripping way, concealed and revealed *in* and *through* language, especially in the intensity of poetic language. In the interplay of concealment and unconcealment (*Verbergung/Entbergung*—Heidegger 1975, 41), language simultaneously nears and distances us from the invisible Presence of the divine. And thus, we recognize that to dwell in God means more than to dwell in impermanence. However, it is our in-betweenness—our dwelling in finitude while remaining open to infinity—that directs us to the Beyond:

Since our perspective is a human perspective, we will never move beyond what is human. But precisely this experience of the limit and the limitedness of language opens us up toward Transcendence. It is not a flight into the unknown, but a recognition of our human in-between situatedness. It is also not a flight

into nebulous worlds but a resolute decision *to dwell* in openness to the Beyond. To acquire an understanding, we need to learn to look not only beyond what is close at hand but at the Beyond itself, in order to see ourselves within a larger whole and in truer in-betweenness. (Wierciński 2019b, 2)

The transcendent calls on us to engage in understanding moment by moment, day by day, until we reach the infinite God and become one in the absoluteness of our oneness with the divine and in the fullness of understanding.

Wierciński's Christmas and Easter messages, as well as his sermons, are an unflagging hermeneutic invitation to (re)consider the task of interpretation of the Scriptures and to (re)think the task of interpretation in a more general sense. His preaching is directed to an international and intercultural circle of collaborators and anybody genuinely interested in reading and interpreting the Gospel and living by it, but also to those who seem to be outside the Church's teachings. Speaking to the very core of human lived experience in its everydayness, the pedagogy of Wierciński's homilies and messages is never narrowed down to sheer moral instruction or a call to become an avid churchgoer. His sermons are profound evocations of the Gospel episodes in which Jesus heals and compassionately caters to human needs. They are situated in the socio-historical context of the *here* and *now*. However, they eschew any form of ideological input, never allowing for any tint of a one-sided or prescribed matrix of thinking and preaching. Wierciński's homilies focus on the transformative power of the Gospel and the radical change of our lives that the Word of God invites us to, and, thus, sensitizes us to how the biblical passages of conversion and healing show us that God transcends our understanding, calling us, at the same time, to embark on a journey of self-transcendence and self-understanding. The divine power of healing and *trans-formation* touches the vulnerable and harmed parts of ourselves. The ineffable beauty of God's entering our existence and transforming us makes us believe in the unbelievable: "The beauty of unpredictability is not a sentimental consolation, but a firm belief in the infinite possibilities of the impossible becoming possible. God can make it happen for us and in us in a way known only to Him" (Wierciński 2018b, 3).

Wierciński's messages remind us that the Nativity and Resurrection are salvific and historical events revealing to us God's inexhaustible and overflowing love that transcends the perils of succumbing to our human rationality and not remaining open to the care of the soul (*die Seelsorge*). If we let the events of Christmas and Easter be reenacted in our souls, to happen inwardly and not only outwardly, we allow God to speak to us and draw us into what is to be revealed *here* and *now* in our personal histories: "Letting God speak to us is a possibility of transgressing the limits and limitedness of scientific rationality. But we know that there are

different rationalities. There is a logic of love that cannot be limited to any reductionist discourse. God is born to us to be this love for us and in us” (Wierciński 2016, 3). This letting God speak to us is an answer not only to our most profound spiritual and material needs, but it is what precisely enables us to see beyond our limitedness; that is beyond our persistent holding onto the measurable and scientifically investigated reality (cf. Wierciński 2023b, 25). Our perception and comprehension of the world (*Wirklichkeitsverständnis*) escape being confined within the circumscriptions of measurability and rational explainability. Bearing witness to the reality that cannot be unpacked within our systems and by means of methods that lead to calculable results, we may open ourselves to the power of the inexhaustible. We also may become witnesses to the transcendent within the limits of the real world (cf. Wierciński 2018c, 89), as God, for us, like for Elijah (1 Kings 19:9a, 11–13a), does not let himself be recognized otherwise than in the invisible but potently present—in “the light wind” of the deepest recesses of our minds, in the tabernacle of our hearts—well expressed in John Henry Newman’s famous motto—*cor ad cor loquitur*.²²

Wierciński teaches us that in the most profound understanding of the entirety of reality (*Wirklichkeit*), we can also recognize the logic that goes beyond the scientifically proven logicity of life—the logic that unveils the inexhaustibility of understanding and life’s inexhaustibility. The reenactment of the Nativity and the Paschal Mystery is the time of the luminous awareness that crosses the flow of time for us human beings who live in time. Transforming us from within, those events of faith originate a mystical understanding, which escapes a schematic, rigid, and customary way of thinking. Our sense of self is shaped and transformed by this new understanding. Christmas and Easter carry with them the message of profound hope for the radical change of our lives, for seeing God’s birth as a true beginning that goes beyond our comprehension, and for seeing death not as a dreadful end but as the promise of dissolving into a loving oneness with God.

We come to an understanding *in* and *through* language. As Wierciński emphasizes, it is love that empowers us to use the language of love, which is not to be harnessed, subjugated, or controlled in any way. We can only be faithful and discreet shepherds of language in the Heideggerian sense when he speaks of our being the shepherds of Being (*Wächter des Seins*) (cf. Wierciński 2018c, 90). Teresa of Avila cautions us not to yield to the temptation of not taking seriously the task of understanding, which is, in the first place, an understanding of oneself: “It is no small pity and should cause us no little shame that through our own fault, we

²² A comprehensive explication of Newman’s motto can be found in Hoegemann (2008).

do not understand ourselves or know who we are” (Teresa of Ávila 2007, 16). Our response to the call of love is our response (*re-spondeo*) to the necessity of understanding ourselves and others as children of the same God. Understanding comes little by little to us when we remain open to the true union with God—him dwelling in us and us dwelling in him.

The inexhaustibility of love and meaning in the events of the Incarnation and Resurrection is the source of unending marveling. Throughout our lives, we are given innumerable possibilities of deepening our understanding of the divine Love and Providence that speaks to us *in* and *through* salvific events. Wierciński’s pastoral preaching—his messages, explicating the wisdom of the Nativity and Resurrection, his theological insight (*Einsicht*) into the Scriptures, ecclesiastical sensitivity, and, above all, the synthesis of his academic life (the entirety of his philosophical-theological writings) and pedagogical activity—show that it is worthwhile to be seduced by God, as he himself confesses, using Zbigniew Herbert’s language of poetic radicality—“forever and without forgiveness” (cf. Wierciński 2018c, 89). The challenge and gift of interpreting God’s truths do not exhaust themselves; the newness of interpretation always dwells in Tradition (*traducere*) and goes beyond it, reconciling opposites and including the marginalized, forgotten, and contradictory voices. Attempting to comprehend the incomprehensible and articulate it, each time we face a new opening (*porta divina*). And on entering it, we may experience the inexhaustible meaningfulness of life and love. Our dwelling in the immediacy of interpreting and living out what is being revealed—the flash of God’s powerful epiphany—manifests the intimate and wondrous unity of the human and the divine.

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