

Spiritual Care in Emergency Situations (Notfallseelsorge) and its Practical and Biblical-Theological Basis¹

Jana Maryšková

Introduction

Caring for a neighbour in need, i.e., ‘for everyone who needs me and to whom I can help’² in a difficult situation ‘here and now’, has always been one of the basic goals of the Church. The Church ‘in the poor and suffering sees the image of its poor and suffering founder. It seeks to alleviate their misery and wants to serve Christ through them.’³ When ‘the Church comes to meet the suffering people and help them with their needs, even with their material needs,’⁴ it fulfils the service of charity (caritas) to one’s neighbour. Love to one’s neighbour is – like listening to the Word of God and the celebration of the Sacraments – a meeting place for us and God,⁵ as for it is written: ‘in the least important one of us we meet Jesus himself, and in Jesus we meet God’ (cf. Matthew 25, 31–46).⁶ This love – enshrined in Trinitarian love, striving for the good of man and his progress in various areas of life and human activities – has the nature of service (diaconia) which the Church carries out, in particular, by helping people in need and in a difficult life situation not only within the Church and to those who ‘belong to the family of faith’ (Galatians 6:10), but also to those beyond the imaginary boundaries of the Church. The Church considers ‘(...) creations of love to one’s neighbour as their duty and inalienable right. Therefore, (...) it honours extraordinarily a gracious love for the poor and the sick, and, so-called, charitable creations and mutual help to relieve human misery of all kinds as well.’⁷

One of the areas in which the Church is diaconically present in society is the assistance in situations of an unexpected and sudden need, such as individual or collective misfortunes, natural disasters, etc. In German-speaking countries, it is provided in the form of, so-called, Notfallseelsorge. Similar Church service to a man in need has not been realised in the Czech Republic, even though the issue of spiritual care during, so-called, emergency events has been discussed.

The aim of the article is to approach this type of Christian⁸ spiritual care in the Czech envi-

1 This article was created with the financial support of the Grant Agency, University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, project no.157/2016/H, ‘Kontexty současné teologie’.

2 *Deus caritas est* 15.

3 *Lumen gentium* 8.

4 *Deus caritas est* 19.

5 Cf. *ibid.*, 16.

6 *Ibid.*, 15.

7 *Apostolicam actuositatem* 8.

8 People providing spiritual care in emergency situations are not just Christians but Muslims as well, cf. © CHRISTLICH-ISLAMISCHE

ronment by using the latest German-language literature of both Catholic and Protestant provenance⁹ (since spiritual care in emergency situations is based on an ecumenical basis), namely by introducing spiritual care in emergency situations in the German language area, also by giving a brief overview of the situation in the Czech Republic and, finally, by adding the biblical-theological arguments. Given the limited scope of the article, only the main aspects of this issue can be mentioned. For more detailed information on Notfallseelsorge, please refer to the professional sources mentioned.

1. Spiritual Care in Emergency Situations (Notfallseelsorge) and its Practical Aspects

Spiritual care in emergency situations helps people (believers and non-believers) who are unexpectedly and suddenly confronted with dying and death. It represents the proclamation of God's closeness and love to man, even in those marginal life situations. This type of care is as old as the church itself - it focuses on the joyful proclamation and the actions of Jesus Christ, who does not pass by a human being in need without noticing or being touched. Since biblical times, spiritual care in emergency situations has belonged to the identity of the Church, respectively churches, to their own, original and innermost task. The Church, through spiritual care in emergency situations, takes seriously its tasks like helping people in need, 'studying the signs of the time and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel (...). In other words, the Church wishes to know and understand the world in which we live, its expectations, desires, and often its dramatic features as well' (GS 4).¹⁰

1.1 Terminology

Spiritual care in emergency situations (called Notfallseelsorge in German) is a term that in the Czech environment does not have a clear equivalent yet. It can be translated, for example, by combining words like emergency pastoralism, pastoral intervention, pastoral intervening care and plenty of others. The German expression Notfallseelsorge (literally 'soul care in an emergency') corresponds to one of the possible Czech translations – spiritual care in emergency situations – used for the purposes of this article. People providing spiritual care in emergency situations are then called Notfallseelsorger/Innen regardless of whether they are clergymen or laymen.

Although the term 'emergency event' is defined in the Czech environment as 'harmful effects of forces and phenomena caused by man's activities, natural influences, and accidents that endanger life, health, property or the environment, and require rescue and clean-up actions',¹¹ it is not used for the translation of the term Notfallseelsorge because the events covered by it do not fully cover those situations in which Notfallseelsorge is provided. Therefore, the German term Notfallseelsorge is translated with the phrase spiritual care in an emergency situation. An emergency situation is an Emergency Situation (Notfall) that arises not only for the reasons outlined above, but also for deaths due to a heart attack, suicide, etc., as will be mentioned below. It is these day-to-day situations that characterise the impact of spiritual care itself in emergency situations.

GESELLSCHAFT, Notfallseelsorge für Muslime und mit Muslimen (on-line), dostupné na: http://www.chrislages.de/seelsorge_2009.htm, accessed 25th Feb. 2017; cf. also © Muslimische Notfallseelsorge. Wir sind für Sie da! (on-line), available at: <http://islam-seelsorge.ch/>, accessed 25th Feb. 2017. This article discusses Christian spiritual care in emergency situations.

9 In addition to these publications, we can also mention the book by Thomas ZIPPERTA, *Notfallseelsorge. Grundlegungen – Orientierungen – Erfahrungen*, 1st ed., Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter GmbH Heidelberg, 2006, p. 272.

10 Cf. Kai HERBERHOLD, „Ich kenne ihr Leid“ (Ex 3,7): Notfallseelsorge in Deutschland, in: *Studien zur Theologie und Praxis der Caritas und Sozialen Pastoral*, vol. 29, ed. Klaus BAUMANN and Ursula NOTHELLE-WILDFEUER, Würzburg: Echter, 2014, pp. 149–150.

11 Act No. 239/2000 Coll., On an Integrated Rescue System and on Amendments to Certain Acts.

1.2 What is Spiritual Care in Emergency Situations (Notfallseelsorge)?

Spiritual care in extraordinary situations originated in German-speaking countries as a 'first aid to the soul' for people struck by unexpected and sudden individual or collective misfortunes.¹² It is the service of the Church to a person in a situation of acute personal emergency, focused on three groups of people: people affected by disasters, accidents, misfortunes, etc. (in the German language area, they are called primary affected – primär Geschädigte); eyewitnesses of these events, survivors and relatives of the primary affected (so called secondary affected – sekundär Geschädigte) and, last but not least, the helping (the spiritual support of the Integrated Rescue System members). Spiritual care in emergency situations is based on ecumenical cooperation, interfaith openness, and sensitivity to the cultural specifics of the affected. The service is provided by Christians, both clergy and specially trained Christians – lay people as volunteers who can be a part of the multi-professional crisis intervention teams.¹³

People providing spiritual care in emergency situations are trained in crisis intervention, they combine psychology and psychotherapy knowledge, and they usually have professional backgrounds in related fields: medicine, police work, safety lines, and hospices.¹⁴ When helping the affected people, they emphasise their spiritual dimension as a supportive and empowering internal resource which can help with crisis management and personality integration. They help the affected people in their search for supporting elements (safety, confidence, hope and comfort) with the help of Christian traditional rituals (prayer, confession, anointing, blessing, baptism in danger of death, etc.). They always respect the faith and worldview of the affected person and make sure his or her dignity is preserved.¹⁵ They collaborate with local IRS units and (if there is a need) are contacted by them or by other organisations in the country, such as the Red Cross, Maltese Aid, Palliative Medicine and Palliative Care, and by many others. If it is not possible, as the result of a tragic event, to use the support of family or other social ties, cooperation with religious and non-religious organisations (psychologists, therapists, hospices, survivors' counsellors, local advisory centres of Charity or Diaconia, etc.) is linked.¹⁶

In German-speaking countries, spiritual care in emergency situations is based on the mutual cooperation of churches and the IRS. In Switzerland, this cooperation is carried out at the cantonal, diocesan and state (schweizerische) level, with the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Notfallseelsorge Schweiz (AG NFS CH) being the overarching authority.¹⁷

In the Federal Republic of Germany, spiritual care in emergency situations is also carried out at several different levels. There are two closely cooperating organisations – Konferenz der katholischen Notfallseelsorgerinnen und Notfallseelsorger and Konferenz Evangelische Notfallseelsorge (KEN). The Catholic Church currently has a representative at the KEN, appointed by the German Bishops' Conference. It is important to cooperate with the Fire Department and the Rescue

12 In the Federal Republic of Germany, the first steps to creating today's Notfallseelsorge were made after an airplane disaster in Hamburg in 1962. Cf. Günter LEHNER et al., *Notfallseelsorge: Von der Initiative zur Institution*, Kassel: Die Akademie Bruderhilfe- Pax-Familienfürsorge, 2009, p. 5.

13 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 4–9; cf. also © NOTFALLSEELSORGE IN ÖSTERREICH, Über uns – Informationsblatt (online), available at: <http://www.notfallseelsorge.at/>, accessed 18th June 2016.

14 In the Czech Republic, it is possible to refer, for example, to the activities of hospital chaplains who also integrate the knowledge of medicine (some of the hospital chaplains are physicians), psychotherapy or the crisis intervention course (which is mentioned as one of the qualification assumptions in the Agreement on Spiritual Care in health care in 2016; in the 2011 supplement of this document, a course of communication in difficult situations is added as a qualification requirement).

15 Cf. Günter LEHNER et al., *Notfallseelsorge*, pp. 9, 12.

16 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 18.

17 Cf. © NOTFALLSEELSORGE SCHWEIZ, Einleitung (online), available at: <http://www.notfallseelsorge.ch/arbeitsgemeinschaft-notfallseelsorge-schweiz/einleitung>, accessed 19th June 2016.

Service and this partnership is provided by the ecumenical society called Arbeitsgemeinschaft Seelsorge in Feuerwehr und Rettungsdienst (AGS).¹⁸

In Austria, spiritual care in emergency situations is ecumenical and interconfessional as well. It is realised by the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria in cooperation with the Roman Catholic dioceses. These churches are represented, in the day-to-day work, by Gesamtleitung der Evangelischen Notfallseelsorge and Konferenz der Diözesanbeauftragten für die röm.-kath. Notfallseelsorge. There is an emphasis on the exchange of experience with the clergy and the chaplains of the Red Cross, fire department, police and army also.¹⁹

1.3 Principles of Spiritual Care in Emergency Situations and the Reasons for its Request

Spiritual care in emergency situations is, in the German-speaking area, based on five principles. The first is the above-mentioned **cooperation principle**. Spiritual care in emergency situations is embedded in ecclesiastical structures and it closely co-operates with IRS units and other service providers such as Caritas, Diaconia, social services, etc. The reason is that only in mutual co-operation is it possible to obtain an idea about the requirements of one and the capacities of the other unit so that the cooperation in the region or the diocese can be effective and synergic rather than 'side-by-side' when helping people in need. According to Thomas Zipper, it is constitutive that spiritual care in emergency situations is carried out in cooperation with the EMS, the fire department and the police, since it is necessary to consider both the assistance to the people in need (that is from the very beginning part of the Christian tradition) and the general conditions in which spiritual care is taking place in emergency situations today.²⁰

The second principle is **the principle of collegiality and regionality** ensuring the accessibility of this assistance. The aim is to ensure that the organisation of spiritual care in emergency situations at local or regional level has the capacity to guarantee the availability of this service 24 hours a day. The third principle is **the principle of the bond to the religious community and the principle of ecumenism**. Spiritual care in emergency situations does not replace pastoral work in a parish or church, but comes out of it and returns back to it. In the situation of an emergency, the local clergy are the first to be called upon. If he or she is not available, a person in charge of the spiritual care in emergency situations is sent to the place and immediately informs the local clergy after intervention to enable him or her to accompany the affected people (in case they have an interest in it). Cooperation takes place on an ecumenical basis. That way, the accompanying afterwards can be done in accordance with the wishes and the confession of the affected person. The fourth principle is **the principle of voluntariness**. Spiritual care in emergency situations is part of the 'normal' pastoral role of the churches, but not every person is able to intervene immediately at any hour of the day or night in emergency situations. It is therefore necessary to recognise the limits of the people providing spiritual care in emergency situations and to know who can be contacted if the specific situation is beyond the limits of the helping person. Participation in the intervention must therefore be guided by the principle of volunteering. Finally, the last, fifth principle is **the principle of professionalism**. This principle is based on the fact that spiritual care in emergency situations is provided in the context of the IRS units intervention and, as in other areas (i.e., spi-

18 Cf. © NOTFALLSEELSORGE IN DEUTSCHLAND, Informationen über die Notfallseelsorge (online), available: <http://www.notfallseelsorge.de/old/info.htm>, accessed 19th June 2016.

19 Cf. © NOTFALLSEELSORGE IN ÖSTERREICH, Struktur der Notfallseelsorge (online), available at: <http://www.notfallseelsorge.at/>, accessed 19th June 2016.

20 Thomas ZIPPERT, Notfallseelsorge als kirchliche Aufgabe, in: *Handbuch Notfallseelsorge*, 3rd revised ed., ed. Joachim MÜLLER-LANGE, Uwe RIESKE and Jutta UNRUH, Edewecht: Stumpf + Kossendey, 2013, p. 30.

ritual care in hospitals or on telephone lines), it is important to be prepared for certain situations and to know the practices of the units involved. It allows those who provide spiritual care in emergency situations to remain calm, act in a reasonable manner, and provide professional spiritual care in these situations. This requires not only initial education and training, but also that which is ongoing. During an intervention situation, therefore, spiritual care in emergency situations is not perceived as a 'foreign element', but as valued professional help.²¹

In order to request spiritual care in emergency situations, the IRS units have a so-called 'catalogue of indicators';²² in other words, there is a specification of situations in which spiritual care can be requested. These include natural deaths in the home environment, deaths by an unknown cause in the home environment, such as sudden infant death syndrome, but also suicide. Beyond the home environment, those are, in particular, traffic accidents (associated with the cooperation with police when giving information, subsequent support, or the offer of personal talk to the survivors), unsuccessful resuscitation, as well as help or assistance during disasters with a great extent of damage such as floods, fires, earthquakes, rail or air disasters, etc. The reason for requesting spiritual care in emergency situations can be also a bank robbery with hostage-taking.²³ These situations require differentiated and flexible pastoral negotiations and professional and receptive spiritual care. 'There are often questions of meaning, guilt and forgiveness at the interface of life and often "premature" death, threatening the loss of life force and the certainty of faith (...)'²⁴ Particularly in situations of sudden death, the primary task of people providing spiritual care in emergency situations is to relieve the affected, structure information chaos, allow contact with reality and its perception, help find words for what the affected are experiencing, and provide room for emotional responses. If the affected people wish it, the people providing spiritual care in emergency situations help with prayer, blessings for the deceased, etc. It is important to cooperate closely with the social surroundings of the affected person or people and, if necessary, there should be an offer of possible follow-up assistance in facilities of both ecclesiastical and communal character.²⁵

1.4 Spiritual Care in Emergency Situations in the Czech Republic

The issue of spiritual care during so-called emergency events has been also discussed in the Czech Republic. Spiritual care is mentioned by the Ministry of the Interior in its bill of 22nd June 2001. This bill deals with the organisation and operation of fire protection units and it states in § 26 that 'the commander of the intervention may ask, through the relevant operation centre, for the assurance of health care, hygienic and anti-epidemic care and **social and spiritual care for the affected, sick and injured** (paragraph 4 b).²⁶

The Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of the Interior – General Directorate of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic on one side, and the representatives of the Czech Bishops'

21 Ibid. Ulrich SLATOSCH, *Notfallseelsorge: Entwicklungen – Gegenwart – offene Zukunft*, in: *Notfallseelsorge. Ein Handbuch*, ed. Christof BREITSAMETER, Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2012, pp. 14–16.

22 In the Czech Republic, the 'manual' for the activities of IRS individual units in a joint intervention is the so-called Catalogue of Type Activities, which contains a fixed list of tasks that each of the IRS units must ensure are carried out. The assurance of spiritual assistance is not mentioned here.

23 Cf. *ibid.* pp. 16–19.

24 DIE DEUTSCHEN BISCHÖFE, *Tote begraben und Trauernde trösten. Bestattungskultur im Wandel aus katholischer Sicht*, Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2005, p. 41.

25 Cf. *ibid.* p. 41.

26 © The Ministry of the Interior on the organisation and operation of fire protection (online), available at: <https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http://storage.pozary.cz/2012/08/uz4f0c7cd27c424/obr50337767f2854.pdf>, accessed 30th October 2016. Highlighted by the author.

Conference and the Ecumenical Council of Churches on the other,²⁷ concluded in January 2003 to

create conditions for the co-operation of the IRS with charitable organisations of the churches and to regulate the principles of their cooperation, in the preparation and implementation of measures in the field of protection of the population, especially humanitarian, psychological and spiritual assistance or help. (...) The Ministry of the Interior - General Directorate of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic, under this Agreement, will ensure the conditions for the inclusion of clergy, representatives of churches and ecclesiastical charitable organizations in crisis staff (...) for the provision of humanitarian, psychological and spiritual assistance to the population and for its preparation.²⁸

On the tenth anniversary of the Agreement, the Inter-Departmental Conference entitled 'Drifted by the Wind, Tossed by a Storm' took place at the Evangelical Theological Faculty of Charles University in Prague in November 2012: on a ship not only commemorating the emergence of the Agreement, but also trying to reflect the expectations associated with it, their fulfilment, the flaws, and sought to clarify the possibilities and conditions for further cooperation between churches and the state during disasters and catastrophes.²⁹

In 2005, the Pilsen Diocese held a seminar on Spiritual Care in Emergencies, dealing with topics such as the role of spirituality during extraordinary events, spiritual service in crisis situations, spiritual care and crisis intervention during extraordinary events in Germany and others.³⁰ The particular emphasis was the need to

lay down the basic rules to assure an environment suitable for organising and securing spiritual help to affected and suffering people in emergency situations, crisis situations associated with war conflicts, major natural disasters, industrial accidents and social conflicts (...) and to create, for the spiritual, that is, church staff, (...) the necessary status which enables for the spiritual help provision.³¹

At the same time, it was stated that 'at the individual levels of the crisis management authorities, there has been no plan or practical realisation of crisis measures regarding to the spiritual help provision.'³² In 2011, an Agreement on the Participation of People Performing a Spiritual Service in the Post-Traumatic Intervention Care System was signed between the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic on one side, and the representatives of the Czech Bishops' Conference and The Ecumenical Council of Churches in the Czech Republic (ERC) on the other. This Agreement establishes the conditions for the 'provision of post-traumatic care by spiritual or clergy people to the members of the Czech Police and of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic, the employees of the Czech Police and the Ministry of the Interior, their family members, friends and the public, i.e., to the victims of emergency events or crimes.'³³

27 Cf. Karel ŠIMR (ed.), *Duchovní péče při mimořádných událostech*, seminary proceedings, Plzeň: Diecézní charita Plzeň, 2005, p. 2.

28 Dohoda o spolupráci mezi HZS, ERC a ČBK, in: Bohumila BAŠTECKÁ a kol., *Terénní krizová práce: psychosociální intervenční týmy*, Praha: Grada, 2005, p. 260.

29 Cf. © ČESKÝ ROZHLAS, *Konference ukázala slabiny i možnosti spolupráce církví a hasičů* (online), available at: http://www.rozhlas.cz/nabozenstvi/zpravy/_zprava/konference-ukazala-slabiny-i-moznosti-spoluprace-cirkvi-a-hasicu--1140376, accessed 3rd October 2016.

30 Cf. Karel ŠIMR (ed.), *Duchovní péče při mimořádných událostech*, p. 1.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

32 *Ibid.*

33 © Dohoda o účasti osob vykonávajících duchovenskou službu na systému poskytování posttraumatické intervenční péče (online),

In the Czech Republic, there is no such thing as Notfallseelsorge in the form provided in the German-speaking region. There is an effort though to make the cooperation between IRS and the charitable organisations of the churches' work. An example is the creation of the Pilsen Diocesan Charity crisis service, which became a part of the Integrated Rescue System of the Pilsen Region.

The Crisis Team goes to the field when alerted by firefighters, police or medical staff and provides the assistance on the spot. (...) The team will provide crisis intervention directly on the spot – they talk to the affected, calm them down, give them a glass of water, provide the most necessary material help, and then advise the affected on the next steps. If necessary, they accompany the affected person(s) even in the following days: mediate social, legal or technical advice, help in dealing with authorities, but also give psychological support in the case of coping with the consequences of trauma.³⁴

Although this is not spiritual assistance in the sense of Notfallseelsorge, the Pilsen diocese may be a good example of how to co-operate in crisis situations at the diocesan and county level, and it may be an inspiration for any future consideration of the establishment of spiritual care in emergency situations in the Czech Republic. Another example may be, this time from another country, the German Red Cross. Within its mission to assist in humanitarian, social and healthcare fields, it has set up its own crisis intervention service, which provides short-term accompanying for people in crisis situations. Crisis intervention tasks include accompanying affected people, activating the social network, supporting and helping with organisational issues and organising follow-up assistance in cases of misfortune, a large number of injuries or disasters. The German Red Cross works closely with the churches, and crisis interventionists inform affected people about the available offer of help from the churches – for example, in the form of spiritual care in emergency situations.³⁵

2. Spiritual Care in Emergency Situations and its Biblical-Theological Basis

Biblically-theological reflection and Christian motivation are, as Kai Herberhold emphasises, preconditions for spiritual care in emergency situations, since spiritual care grows in them. In the Scriptures (the source of our faith), spiritual care in emergency situations has its biblically-theological anchoring, justification, and hence basis for action (that is the pastoral task of the Church), for its legitimacy and existence.³⁶

2.1 General Starting Points

Sacred Scripture is full of stories about individual or collective need and God's help, and about the struggle with the evil that man experiences and which refers him to God. It is 'like a great book of suffering'.³⁷

available at: <http://spcp.prf.cuni.cz/dokument/dohoda-posttraumatickapecpe.pdf>, accessed 19th June 2016.

34 © ČRo PLZEŇ, Už v padesáti případech od počátku roku pomohla krizová služba plzeňské charity (online), available at: http://www.rozhlas.cz/plzen/zpravodajstvi/_zprava/129177?, accessed 21st October 2016.

35 Cf. Kai HERBERHOLD, „Ich kenne ihr Leid“ (Ex 3,7): Notfallseelsorge in Deutschland, pp. 118–119.

36 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 151.

37 *Salvifici doloris* 6.

What, however, according to Jan Heller, ‘passes through the Bible as a red thread, and connects most closely and deeply the Old and New Testaments, is the message of God who approaches and descends to man (...) God acts, intervenes, sets free, saves. And the testimony of God’s interventions or intervention, the divine act of liberation, is the essence and the core of the entire biblical structure.’³⁸

God, in the history of the chosen nation, manifests himself as a faithful God, God who maintains the covenant and takes care of his people and individuals; He is Immanuel – God who is with his people. The name which God reveals to Moses in the burning bush is the proof. ‘I am who I am’ (Ex 3:14), and according to Heller’s interpretation:

I am the one who is impressively present, by his own will and by his own decision, not by invocation and cult (...). The content of the name JHVH thus covers the content of the name Immanuel, ‘God with us’, which (in the same way as JHVH) testifies that God (who has descended and come) is here with us and close to us.³⁹

God preserves, manifests and unveils this faithfulness in the person of Jesus Christ, fulfilling the Old Testament promise of salvation and changing the deeds of the poor and suffering (cf. Is 61:1-2).⁴⁰ The core of Jesus’ public service is the message about the Kingdom of God. The sign of its proximity is Jesus’ deeds, especially healing and exorcism. Jesus always stands on the side of the needy and in his inclination to those whom others despise, God’s purpose with each man is manifested (as well as the dignity of every human being).

The proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the image of God as the God who heals, reconciliates and loves, are manifested in the hour of Jesus’ death on the Cross. According to C. V. Pospíšil, ‘the common denominator of the whole of Jesus’ public service is the Son’s obedience and his love for the disabled, the outcast, the neglected, the sinners. This attitude of completely free *caritas* expresses itself maximally at the hour of the Cross (cf. Phil 2:6-8; Rom 5:7-8).’⁴¹ ‘In the Cross of Christ not only is the Redemption accomplished through suffering, but *also human suffering itself has been redeemed*.’⁴² Suffering has been transformed and must therefore be seen in the context of Christ’s death and resurrection. Human life remains fragile and endangered, and sickness, pain, suffering, and death inherently belong to it, but Christ ‘overwhelmed death by his death’ and transformed it internally so that we can ‘speak about the redeemed death, exactly according to the rule: What was accepted by the Word can be saved.’⁴³ He opened the way for man to the Father – ‘the temple curtain was torn at the time of Jesus’ death (cf. Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38; Lk 23:45) – the tearing of the temple curtain (...) means that the way to God is unconstrained now.’⁴⁴ It does not mean that there will never be any pain in life – even in the lives of believers – (cf. Rom 7:24), but it is possible to confront it, having trust in God’s help and love at the same time. And we will not be departed from this love, not by suffering, anxiety, persecution or hunger, poverty, or even by

38 Jan HELLER, *Bůh sestupující: Pokus o christologii Starého zákona*, Praha: Kalich, 1994, pp. 7, 13.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 69–70.

40 Cf. PAPEŽSKÁ BIBLICKÁ KOMISE, *Bible a morálka: Biblické kořeny křesťanského jednání*, Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2010, p. 55.

41 Ctirad Václav POSPÍŠIL, *Ježíš z Nazareta, Pán a Spasitel*, Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2006, p. 325.

42 *Salvifici doloris* 19.

43 Ctirad Václav POSPÍŠIL, *Ježíš z Nazareta, Pán a Spasitel*, p. 375.

44 Joseph RATZINGER, *Ježíš Nazaretský*, the second part, Brno: Barrister & Principal, 2011, p. 137.

death (cf. Rom 8:35, 38-39).

Spiritual care in emergency situations is the (often implicit) proclamation of God's love for man and of God's proximity, even in extreme life situations such as dying and death. Its task is, above all, to stand in these situations alongside those suffering and to proclaim God, who is present even in crisis situations. And even though he may seem to be an unknown or hidden God in the face of tragic events, he remains the underlying foundation, God-with-us. This is the proprium of spiritual care in emergency situations.

2.2 Spiritual Care in Emergency Situations in the Perspective of Selected Biblical-Theological Motives

Spiritual care in emergency situations is, primarily, a direct help to a person in need and it may have different forms as expressed in the following pericopes. These are considered to be the biblical-theological basis for spiritual care in emergency situations. Many of these parables have a wider validity and can be related to Christian help to a person in need in general. This, however, does not diminish their relevance to spiritual care in emergency situations, as they also bring a number of specific impulses for it.

2.2.1 Readiness for Immediate, Unconditional Emergency Assistance

Andreas Müller-Cyran considers the story of the Acts of the Apostles the first 'intervention' of spiritual care in emergency situations (cf. Acts 9: 36-43). After the death of one woman, two men were sent to Peter (who was staying in a nearby village) with an urgent request: 'Come quickly to us! Peter went straight ahead to join them' (Acts 9: 38b-39a). Peter's behaviour is a model for spiritual care in emergency situations for several reasons: the apostle does not ask about the reasons for their plea, who died or whether it is worth being disturbed and to go with them. He does not examine whether the deceased woman was or was not baptised, but (in such an emergency) he immediately sets off on the journey.⁴⁵

Similar behaviour as in the Acts of the Apostles (even in a completely different situation of emergency) is described in the well-known parable of the merciful Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). This story is the basic picture of Christian ethics for the (and not only) charitable organisations of the Church,⁴⁶ and it is considered to be a pattern for any helping action. Also, the Samaritan, who encounters a person in acute personal need, is – like Peter – ready to help immediately, regardless of religion, race or origin of the affected person, and regardless of reward. Both pericopes, although telling of different emergency situations, are (for the above mentioned reasons) a behavioural model for people providing spiritual care in emergency situations. Encouragement appears, for example, in the book of Sirach which states that one should be ready to help people in need. The author urges people not to turn away from the dead or from those weeping or the sick, and, conversely, he wants them to share sadness with those who mourn and to try to comfort them (Sir 7:33-35).

45 Cf. Andreas MÜLLER-CYRAN, Notfallseelsorge: Seelsorge am Karsamstag, in: *Unterwegs zu einer Ethik pastoralen Handelns*, ed. Markus GRAULICH – Martin SEIDNADER, Würzburg: Echter, 2011, p. 141.

46 Cf. *Deus caritas est* 31a.

2.2.2 'The Kenosis of Empty Hands'

In addition to this preparedness to intervene in emergency situations, the appropriate and suitable way of pastoral behaviour is also important. An example of such action can be found in the book of Job. It is the attitude of Job's friends, who initially keep silent and help using their empathy and co-patience to bear Job's suffering. However, when Job interrupts his silence to shout out his pain (cf. Job 3:1-13), his friends – instead of prevailing in silence – bring a series of arguments against his speech (Job 4:17-21; 17-18). They try to alleviate Job's pain while (due to their arguments) his suffering continues to deepen (Job 6:1-26).⁴⁷

In connection with Job's story, Traugott Jähnichen mentions the expression 'the kenosis of empty hands'. This term was used by Heino Falcke (a former Erfurt provost) in connection with an attack at the Gutenberg Gymnasium in Erfurt in April 2002, in which 13 teachers, a secretary, a student, a policeman, and the assailant himself were killed. In the theological interpretation of those events, H. Falcke then used the expression 'the kenosis of empty hands' in the sense of the kenosis of Jesus Christ, as described in Philippians (Phil 2:7n). According to Falcke, this kenosis means to refrain from any action and talk, be sympathetic to the affected in their powerlessness and inability to speak, to help them bear their suffering, and to bear and handle the moments of silence. This attitude reminds us of the attitude of Job's friends, who 'then sat with him on the ground for seven days and nights, and none of them said a word to him, for they saw his pain which was immense' (Job 2:13). It is precisely this restraint that Falcke mentions as an attitude that is connected with unconditional human solidarity in suffering and which, in the sense of kenosis, is the basic attitude which opens up space for prayers, questions and even remorse addressed to God. This is the only attitude which allows the theological interpretation of tragic events.⁴⁸ Similar words are used, for example, by Aleš Opatrný: 'Whoever wants to talk about suffering, its meaning, and its Christian value should really consider every word (...). The superficial and abbreviated interpretations of Jesus' suffering and our participation in it will not help, rather it will hurt.'⁴⁹ During the 'intervention' of spiritual care in emergency situations it is not about an apologetic argumentation or solution to the problem of theodicy. It is, above all, an authentic 'being-with' the affected (as mentioned, for example, by Pope Benedict XVI⁵⁰).

A similar example is Jesus' Mother, Mary. Mary, 'who kept all things in mind and contemplated' (Lk 2:19), is often in the background of Jesus' life; she is 'only' in proximity to that. But in the hour of Jesus' dying and death, she stands on his side and stays with him. She cannot, like Simon of Cyrene, change the situation, but they are both there and carry those hard times with him (cf. Mt 27:32; Mk 15:21; Gal 6:2).⁵¹ Here, the same way as in the book of Job, we can talk about the 'kenosis of empty hands'. Nothing can be changed, nothing can be done, and the only possible activity in a crisis situation is to solidarise with those affected in their powerlessness, help them bear and share their misery, and handle the moments of silence.

47 Cf. Kai HERBERHOLD, „Ich kenne ihr Leid“ (Ex 3,7): Notfallseelsorge in Deutschland, pp. 154–155.

48 Cf. Traugott JÄHNICHEN, Von Gott reden angesichts von Leiden und Tod. Die Theodizee in der Notfallseelsorge, in: *Notfallseelsorge. Ein Handbuch*, ed. Christof BREITSAMETER, Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2012, pp. 128–129.

49 Aleš OPATRŇÝ, *Pastorační péče v méně obvyklých situacích*, Praha: Pastorační středisko sv. Vojtěcha při Arcibiskupství Pražském, 2005, p. 28.

50 Cf. *Spe salvi* 38, 39.

51 Cf. Kai HERBERHOLD, „Ich kenne ihr Leid“ (Ex 3,7): Notfallseelsorge in Deutschland, p. 162.

2.2.3 'I am with you' as a Promise of God's Presence

A. Müller-Cyran, the deacon and the head of Notfallseelsorge in the München-Freising archdiocese, describes the experience of many people providing spiritual care in emergency situations. Those, during their first contact with the affected person, felt inadequate to present themselves with their name seeing that the affected person ('overwhelmed' by the sudden loss of a close man) was mostly unable to perceive such information. During the first introduction, the sentence: 'I have time for you now' has been proven to be suitable. This formulation, according to Müller-Cyran, characterises well the need of a person who (even if surrounded by many people from the IRS) feels overlooked and confused by what is happening around him, experiencing himself as helpless and his surroundings as chaotic.⁵² This sentence can (not accidentally) evoke the relationship with God's name (cf. Ex 3:14), for if one introduces himself or herself with the phrase 'I have time for you and I am here for you now', it implicitly sounds like (according to Müller-Cyran), God's promise to Moses and his people '(...) I saw the misery of my people (...). I know their pain. I went down to set them free ...' (cf. Ex 3:7-8). 'In the promise of the presence (which is taking place in the encounter with the other person) is the first step to experience showing that in pain and sadness one is not alone and that this fact may be a source of comfort for him.'⁵³ The promise of presence does not mean that everything will be the same as before, it is rather the sharing of the helplessness of a traumatised and grieving man, but also of those who (despite all efforts and techniques) cannot prevent death. This promise of mere presence refers to the core of spiritual care in emergency situations, which does not lie in action. It rather consists in the strength to persevere in helplessness and in the silence of mourners. A person providing spiritual care in emergency situations is the one who 'is with' the other person. He or she is defined by the phrase 'I am here with you and for you.' Yet he or she knows that in this 'being with' a person in need is present The One who gives him or her the support, which is then forwarded to the grieving ones.⁵⁴

2.2.4 The Language of Prayer

Silence opens up, as it has been said above, space for prayers, farewell rituals, and mourning. These help affected people to find elements that can provide them with support, hope and comfort. One of the forms of prayer (also used in spiritual care in emergency situations) is the prayer of the Psalms. The Psalms, even in difficult situations, in the moments of 'God's silence' (Ps 77), testify to the great acts of God. They are also (at the same time) God's Word, when they admonish, warn and comfort. They contain people's experience and feelings, and the issues which those people (in their appeals and wishes) address to God.⁵⁵ Therefore they have (more than elsewhere) their place in spiritual care in emergency situations, as they may be (for the affected people) the expression of their own tragic experience. In this context, J. B. Metz speaks about the 'mystery of suffering as the way to God', which we encounter in Israel's tradition of prayer – in psalms, lamentations, in the Book of Job, and in many places of prophetic books.

The language of these prayers is itself a matter of suffering, it is a language of crisis, a language of adversity and of a radical threat, a language of grief and accusation, a language

52 Cf. Andreas MÜLLER-CYRAN, Notfallseelsorge: Seelsorge am Karsamstag, p. 145.

53 Ibid., p. 146.

54 Ibid., pp. 146–147.

55 Cf. Kai HERBERHOLD, „Ich kenne ihr Leid“ (Ex 3,7): Notfallseelsorge in Deutschland, pp. 155–156.

of shouting. The language of this mysticism of God is not a compassionate answer to the experienced suffering but rather a passionate questioning of God in the midst of suffering, a demand (or a question) full of tense expectations. (A question to God) which is always something other than the echo of our wishes, even if it was emotionally the deepest one; which is always more and something other than answering our questions, even if they were the hardest and most ferocious - as Job puts it, and (in fact) Jesus as well.⁵⁶

In psalms, sorrow, pain and the inability to speak are transformed into words of grief. In that way, the pain, anger and helplessness is articulated and presented to God. In the prayer of the psalm, the affected people experience the possibility and the way of how to speak to God, and (above all) the fact that there is someone to whom they can address their own painful questions. Prayer in emergency situations is a struggle to experience the presence of God in God's absence and silence, and it can be the first important step to master a dramatic situation.⁵⁷

2.2.5 Announcing Death

People providing spiritual care in emergency situations are present at moments when a report is passed on to the bereaved about the death of their loved ones. From the theological point of view, there is one important aspect for the spiritual care in emergency situations associated with the acclamation of the deacon or priest (during worship, specifically at the celebration of the Eucharist): 'The Secret of Faith'. The assembly of believers responds: 'We proclaim your death, we confess your resurrection, we are waiting for you, Lord ...' For spiritual care in emergency situations, it is essential that the praise of resurrection precedes the announcement of death. 'Proclaim' here means to admit the fact that death has occurred. People providing spiritual care in emergency situations are often the first available for the bereaved to tell about how their beloved died and thus they contribute to the possibility that death may be proclaimed. The one who knows the process of mourning is aware of what it means if death has not been proclaimed, if the bereaved one has not accepted the fact that the person who was close to him will never return home. The announcement of death is an indispensable, dialectical component of the praise of the resurrection. Only where death is proclaimed is it possible to praise the resurrection. If we skip the announcement of death, the praise of the resurrection will remain 'in the air' mentally and liturgically for the lack of its premise. In a situation of sudden passing away, spiritual care in emergency situations gives to the announcement of death a certain expression.⁵⁸

2.2.6 Accompanying

Spiritual care in emergency situations is primarily used in a situation of an acute emergency. Unlike the IRS components (whose intervention is counted in minutes), spiritual care in emergency situations comes to the fore when the event occurs (often only when the rescue service doctor reports the death) and focuses mainly on the impact of the sudden death on the bereaved.⁵⁹ Assistance to the bereaved may also have the character of subsequent longer-term accompanying. K. Šimr states

56 Johann Baptist METZ, *Úvahy o politické teologii*, Praha: Oikoymenh, 1994, p. 93.

57 Cf. Traugott JÄHNICHEN, *Von Gott reden angesichts von Leiden und Tod*, pp. 129–130.

58 Cf. Ulrich SLATOSCH, *Notfallseelsorge: Entwicklungen – Gegenwart – offene Zukunft*, p. 19; cf. also Andreas MÜLLER-CYRAN, *Notfallseelsorge: Seelsorge am Karsamstag*, pp. 147–148.

59 Cf. Andreas MÜLLER-CYRAN, *Notfallseelsorge: Seelsorge am Karsamstag*, pp. 140–141.

that ‘first spiritual help’ is not about conversation, but ‘rather about silence, prayer and rituals that open up the space for perceiving what goes beyond us. The conversation is (in spiritual help) applied rather in the mid-term phase of weeks and months after the event. This period is characterised by questions about meaning, guilt, or by the creation of a new relationship with the dead.’⁶⁰

An example of how a companion in the spirit of Jesus’ practice may appear is the pericopus of revelation on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). It tells a well-known story about two disciples who (along the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus) talk about previous events that struck them and disturbed them. On their way, Jesus joins them, but they do not recognise him. This ‘unknown’ man first listens to them, is in silence with them, accompanies them on their way, and takes their situation and worries seriously. Only afterwards he interprets the Scriptures to them, and links the preceding events to ‘all parts of the Scriptures in the context with him’ (cf. Lk 24:27). This method of accompaniment enables the disciples to look at things from a different perspective, and opens their minds (cf. Lk 24:32). They meet Jesus on their common way, in the interpretation of the Scriptures, in prayer, during the breaking of bread (Lk 24,30-31), and those meetings (as K. Herberhold states) have been present until today in the basic functions of the Church – in diaconia, martyria, liturgy and koinonia.⁶¹

Müller-Cyran calls spiritual care in emergency situations ‘pastoral guidance of the Easter Sabbath’.

The situation when people provide spiritual care in emergency situations (especially the accompanying of the bereaved in the case of sudden death) reflects something of the ‘no longer’ and ‘not yet’ of the Easter Sabbath: ‘in fact’, there is not much to ‘do’ other than to be here for the bereaved. There is neither talking nor acting at the forefront. What applies to be central for spiritual care in emergency situations is the constitutive element of the Easter experience: farewell to the deceased. Just as the women go to Jesus’ dead body in the morning darkness (Mt 28:1, Mk 16:1, Lk 24:1, Jn 20:1), a pastoral worker goes with the bereaved – where possible – to see the body of the dead.⁶²

Pastoral guidance, when facing death, is mainly pastoral guidance of Easter Sabbath. Exposing oneself to the silence and to the emptiness of the Easter Sabbath, allows one to meet the fear and sorrows of the people around Jesus at that time. One meets the cause of Christian hope and belief.⁶³

Conclusion

Spiritual care in emergency situations is, as noted above, the service of the Church to a person in a situation of acute personal need. It is ‘first aid for the soul’ to those affected by unexpected and sudden misfortunes. People providing spiritual care in emergency situations accompany those in need in these situations, help them overcome their initial helplessness, solve the problems they have encountered, and (in cooperation with their family, friends, colleagues, parishes) activate sources inner of strength. They allow (with the help of prayers and rituals) to create a safe space for saying farewell to the deceased, they help affected people by their presence, they respect their

60 Karel ŠIMR, Neštěstí, náboženství a duchovnost, in: Bohumila BAŠTECKÁ et al., *Psychosociální krizová spolupráce*, Praha: Grada, 1. ed., 2013, p. 40.

61 Cf. Kai HERBERHOLD, „Ich kenne ihr Leid“ (Ex 3,7): Notfallseelsorge in Deutschland, p. 160.

62 Andreas MÜLLER-CYRAN, Notfallseelsorge: Seelsorge am Karsamstag, pp. 148–149.

63 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 149.

wishes and needs, provide support and confidence in situations where support points are missing, help the affected people to bear their suffering. By this co-existence with a person in need, they are a sign and a tool of the inner union of God with man and man with God in suffering – no matter what degree of faith and what knowledge of Christianity this person has. Christians testify their faith in God by following Christ in his positive affection toward a human being in distress, respecting his or her dignity and that way they are becoming witnesses of God's love and proximity. Like the disciples on their way to Emmaus, 'they must always go back and forth, ask questions again, listen again (...). The disciples are accompanied along this path and they themselves learn to how accompany someone as well. They learn how to convey the message they heard. They learn to find a place suitable for giving their news.'⁶⁴

Spiritual Care in Emergency Situations (Notfallseelsorge) and its Practical and Biblical-Theological Basis

Abstract

The article deals with spiritual care in emergency situations (Notfallseelsorge), being one of the areas in which the Church is diaconically present in society, and about its practical and biblical-theological outcomes. The first part presents the spiritual care in emergency situations in the German language area and gives a brief overview of the situation in the Czech Republic. The second part is dedicated to biblical texts and their reflection, and those are taken as a necessary premise for spiritual care in emergency situations.

Key words: emergency situation (Notfall), spiritual care in emergency situations (Notfallseelsorge), IRS, Czech Republic, biblical motives

Author contact

Jana Maryšková MA et MA

University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice

Faculty of Theology, Department of Ethics, Psychology and Charity Work

Kněžská 8, 370 01 České Budějovice

marysj00@tf.jcu.cz

64 © Tomáš HALÍK, Ježíšův příběh zůstává otevřený. Speech at the awarding of an honorary doctorate of theology at the University of Erfurt, 13th November 2014 (online), available at: <http://halik.cz/cs/tvorba/proslovy-kazani/proslov/51/>, accessed 12th November 2016.