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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF HAGIOTHERAPY

A Handbook

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Preface

Science persists in wondering when the universe came into existence, and how the Earth, nature and humankind were made. The nations are like the branches of a tree, so their roots and beginnings should be sought. We try to explore the beginnings and roots from which all scientific discoveries and human activities have sprung. Thus, hagiotherapy also seeks its beginnings and concepts, how it began, where it developed, and what its aims are.

The sources of hagiotherapy and evangelisation

When I completed my studies and was awarded my doctorate in Fundamental Theology from the Papal University Gregoriana in Rome in 1971, I was asked by the leaders of the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy in Zagreb, where I was living, to offer religious instruction to the high school pupils who came to their church. So, at the same time, I provided religious instruction, served as a priest in the convent church of St. Vincent in Zagreb, and was also Professor of Fundamental Theology at the Catholic Theological Faculty. During the years that followed, I also organised religious instruction for students.

In the first year, we held discussions, in the second, studied Sacred Scripture, and in the third, learned how to pray authentically. At first, spontaneous prayers were short and ‘smart’, but gradually, they began to come from the heart. We used to fast for twenty-four hours and then pray with cleansed bodies, transferring purity to the soul. In 1975, at Pentecost, we decided to go on a two-day pilgrimage from Zagreb to Marija Bistrica.

This sacrifice somehow grounded us and filled us with gentleness, peace and intelligence, drawing us onward to conquer new spiritual heights. After four years of intense religious instruction, liturgically organised Holy Masses, discussions, pilgrimages and seeking the power which the Church received on the Day of Pentecost, in August 1975 we decided to go to Davor, to spend some time in peace and quiet, and through prayer, conversation, Eucharistic encounters and fellowship to seek the 'power from on high'.

Every day for three weeks we left the village of Davor for the clearings along the River Sava, and spent the entire day in prayer and talking about faith, returning by boat in the evening to Holy Mass and our beds. On the last day of July, at the suggestion of the parish priest, Fr. Stipe Josipović, we decided to spend the whole night in the church, keeping vigil before the Holy Sacrament in worship, turning to God and prayer. In the morning, we experienced amazing joy, strength and elation, which was a sign that we were on the right path to the power of the Spirit which would equip us as witnesses and lead us to experience faith in the Holy Spirit. At that time, I knelt in prayer every day for three weeks, praying that the Lord would show me

the power of the Holy Spirit, the power which the apostles had received and lived, as had the saints in the Church. That power truly transformed me, and then all those participating in religious instruction experienced it too. During the night of August 2nd 1975, while I was praying before going to sleep, I experienced the power of the Spirit.

Three months later, this deep experience of the Spirit of God began to flow to the other members of the religious instruction group. They were convinced of God's work, met for prayer and study, organised night-time Eucharist devotions, recognised the Church as the mystical Body of Christ, and began to have a marked influence on everyone who came to Sunday worship services, enriching them with content, prayers and music. The very next year, the first issue of the magazine *Koraci* (Steps) was published, in which they described the riches of the Spirit which they had received. The group quickly grew as new members were added.

Seminars for the evangelisation of the Church

Immediately after these events, I went to see my Ordinary, Archbishop Franjo Kuharić, and told him about everything I had experienced and how it was spreading to others. He said it was the work of the Holy Spirit and gave not only his support, but said he would come and pray with us. Our enthusiasm about the experience and gifts of the Holy Spirit often led us to keep vigil all night long, in homes, or in monastery chapels, before the displayed Holy Sacrament, to fast, and to meet every evening to pray together and deepen our faith. In the summer months, we would go to a monastery or empty rectory on the coast and receive teaching, celebrate the Eucharist, pray, and live in fellowship, always seeking new experiences of grace. Those were days of rest for the soul and body, but also of preparation for the mission we were anticipating.

Four years later, in September 1979, the archbishop asked me to start holding seminars to spread the experience of the Spirit and his gifts throughout the archdiocese. The first such seminar was held in Marija Bistrica, and about forty

priests, nuns and lay people attended, including the archbishop himself. The next seminars were soon organised in November 1979, and at the New Year (1980) in Split. After that, we held seminars in all the cities in Croatia, and in Slovenia, Belgrade, Skopje and Sarajevo. I was always accompanied by students who would give testimonies about their experience of the Spirit. Soon, they began to study 'lay theology' and prepare themselves in groups to lead seminars for the evangelisation of the Church and experience of the Spirit. In the religious instruction hall, we formed groups of new students, each with two experienced students to lead them in experiencing prayer, faith and the Spirit.

In 1981, we invited Dr. Heribert Mühlen, Professor of Dogmatics in Paderborn, Germany, a Vatican Council theologian, top expert in the theology of the Holy Spirit, and participant in the charismatic movement, to hold a three-day seminar for priests in Zagreb. That was when we met for the first time, and we went on to become friends and associates. We explored together the best models for the 'evangelisation of the Church', as Pope Paul VI called it in *Evangelii nuntiandi*. We found that the best, surest model was the early Christian catechumenate, which the

Church practised up to the sixth century. Two years later, I wrote a book based on the early Christian catechumenate, *Encounter with the Living God*, in which I presented a method for leading seminars for the evangelisation of the Church in theoretical, practical, catechetical and methodological terms. Along with suggested methodical exercises, it contained catecheses suitable for evangelisation presentations. The book was soon translated into several foreign languages, and the Croatian version, published by 'Kršćanska sadašnjost', is now in its fourteenth edition.

I held at least twenty seminars every year, and the numbers of those attending continued to grow. In 1985, I was asked for the first time to hold a three-day seminar in Austria, and since then, have been invited countless times to Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Ukraine, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as to the USA and Canada. I was asked twice to give lectures at the national assembly of the charismatic movement in Austria, held in a sports hall in Linz. Well known theologians such as Heribert Mühlen and R. Cantalame also participated.

I conducted the seminar according to the four periods of the catechumenate: the pre-catechumenate, catechumenate, time of purification and enli-

ghtenment, and mystagogy. In the pre-catechumenate, I tackled the issue of our human existential helplessness to take our fate into our own hands, to be moral, healthy and immortal, and the need to know our Creator and proprietor of the world, who holds our fate in his hands. In the second part, I emphasised the importance of knowing Jesus of Nazareth as the only way of acquiring basic information about ourselves and being set free from slavery to Evil and the foreign, unknown powers of Evil. In the third part, I introduced the prayer for freedom, followed by the prayer for healing. Only when it is free and healthy can the spiritual soul enter the fourth period, experience the sacramental gifts, and become equipped to evangelise others. After the Second Vatican Council, the Church was revitalised and reissued the entire early Christian catechumenate as a rite for use in leading adults to baptism, or the sacraments of initiation. However, in leading evangelisation seminars, and now the new evangelisation, the most important thing is for leaders to have a thorough-going experience of the Holy Spirit. Without that, the entire catechumenate is reduced to the presentation of knowledge, not life, salvation and redemption. Leaders who are filled with the Holy Spirit are essential and irreplaceable. This is why, after adults receive the chrism and baptism, chur-

ches are emptier and emptier, because without the Holy Spirit and the experience of his work, we cannot enter into the life of the Church and the practice of faith. Everything becomes formal, external, playacting. This is the cancerous wound of church pastoral work. This is why the new evangelisation has been proclaimed as the essential, primary task of the Church.

In order for the seminars to succeed, during the first years we held all-day devotions before the displayed Holy Sacrament in all the places where the seminars were held, conscious that any fruit would be the gift of the Holy Spirit, rather than the result of our own efforts.

Steps towards hagiotherapy

However, during seminars for the evangelisation of the Church, there proved to be a great need for an understanding of the human anthropological dimension. Although we obtain grace through the sacraments and prayer, we do not know how this happens inside a person, and where it needs to happen within his spiritual soul. We talk of the soul as an abstract entity, as something intangible, and this is why the efforts of the Church remain

fruitless, unable to mediate holiness and effect moral change in people. On the other hand, in the third period of the seminar, we pray the prayers for freedom and healing from spiritual wounds without understanding where we are enslaved and sick. We speak of sin and Evil. But we do not understand how sin operates in a person and what happens within us. We know that sin separates us from God, but we do not understand where it happens within us. We are wounded and sick in soul and spirit, but we do not have diagnoses or treatments for these things. We perform anointing of the sick in the formal sense, not expecting change in a person's life of faith and his relationship with God. We know from revelation that the source of all trouble, evil, sickness and death is original sin. But we do not understand how original sin operates and causes new sins, the agents of new evils. The idea has become unconvincing and almost mythological.

The neurosciences, anthropological medicine and logotherapy have revealed that evil is the cause of all physical and mental illnesses. This means that we need to begin to deepen our scientific understanding of evil and sin, along with the biblical information we have about them. Such studies are important not only to the

faith of the Church, but to medicine, whether somatic or psychiatric. So it is essential to research the human spiritual soul thoroughly, i.e. the human anthropological dimension. We need to understand the person in order to heal the body and soul, and to understand the details of revelation. Anthropology should be a central subject in scientific research. From it, anthropological medicine can then be developed. In other words, only by investigating human nature can we understand nature itself, interpersonal relationships, evil, sickness, fear, lack of morals, crime, war and death, and God himself, because we are created in God's image.

In addition, in the third period of the catechumenate, or the third part of the new evangelisation seminar, we use prayer to heal wounds, trauma and pain which have occurred as the result of sin, whether a person's own sin or the sins of his environment. The seminar participants give to Jesus in prayer their troubles, anxieties, fears, false guilt, hurt, injustice and helplessness, and receive the experience of relief, healing, spiritual conversion and the desire to encounter Jesus Christ. Then we pray the pray of renunciation, or prayer for freedom, in which we ask the Creator to set the participants free from negative habits,

various addictions, idolatries, occult connections, sorcery, witchcraft, spiritualism and vices, and to give them the freedom of heart to open themselves up to the working of the Holy Spirit, who longs to dwell in our bodies as living temples.

However, the success of such prayers during evangelisation seminars depends on faith, whether traditional or experiential, and only baptised persons and the faithful, not everyone, can pray in this way. The prayers are prayed without understanding the organism of the spiritual soul and without diagnosis. They are prayed for all the participants at once, not individually. So a huge task remains – how to help each person individually and make healing efficacious. This is why I have dedicated myself to investigating the spiritual soul, or the human anthropological dimension, on the basis of philosophical understandings of human beings and their woundedness, and on healing the wounds of the soul through a philosophical understanding of being and the transcendentals. Thus, everyone has the potential to heal their spiritual soul in an extremely effective way.

In order to initiate this important scientific research, I began to read, think, discuss and write about the central source of human problems and

the source of all treatment. I understood that I was grappling with the human biological and psychological levels, along with the theological. In my research, I was particularly helped by scholarly works which revealed the anthropological and theological dimensions of human beings and the relevance of these area to holistic healing, conversion and understanding. Along with the logotherapy of Viktor Frankl, the anthropological medicine of Arthur Jores, the classic philosophical anthropology of Emerich Coreth, the reality of the spirit of Nikolai Berdyaev, and in particular, the documents written by Pope John Paul II about salvific trials and spiritual suffering, and M. Beck's relationship between the soul and disease, I was greatly helped by works in the field of neuroscience, biology, genetics and spiritual intelligence, such as *Healing the Hardware of the Soul* by Daniel Amen, *The Biology of Belief* by Bruce Lipton, *The Memory of the Body* by Joachim Bauer, *Spiritual Intelligence* by Zohar and Marshall, *Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses* by Jean-Claude Larchet, and many others. All these led me in the initial period to an understanding of the difference between a prayerful therapeutic approach and a scientific one in healing 'internal diseases'. In the second period, partly transitioning and partly keeping

to the first, my book *Diagnosis of the Soul and Hagiotherapy* was written. However, I soon realised that there was a yawning chasm between the anthropological approach and that of faith-prayer treatment. That was when I wrote *Hagiotherapy in the Encounter with Man*. In this spirit, international scientific studies in hagiotherapy began in 2009. In the transition period from faith-based to scientific-spiritual therapy, an international scientific symposium on hagiotherapy was held in Zagreb in 2006. In addition, many courses were held in Croatia and abroad. The participants in these courses often expressed confusion about the development of hagiotherapy from a prayer-based discipline to a scientific, anthropological field. We are used to static knowledge and procedures, while new discoveries push us towards new efforts in study and action. Yet we must always be aware that we live in a world of dynamic life and work, rather than a static one. If we do not move forward, we lose ground. Moving forward is the basic requirement of life on Earth. Only those who move forward succeed and win, with all-round personal development. And if we do not continue to investigate the best therapeutic procedures, we will not be able to help people to get well.

It is important to emphasise that we are not referring to physical or mental health. Hagiotherapy investigates the human anthropological structure, or the organism of the spiritual soul. So it is not about the level of the biological or psychological soul, but the level of the spiritual soul, which is specific and exclusively a human organism. Because of the spiritual soul, we are human beings. By investigating and healing this human reality, we touch the reality of the Creator on the one hand, and the reality of the psychosomatic human level on the other. This is why hagiotherapy is extremely important in understanding divine revelation, and theology should adopt it as a philosophical, therapeutic field, in which the human spirit and God's Spirit work together. However, hagiotherapy does not involve God the Creator through theological or pastoral, but through philosophical and anthropological means. So we recognise God not only in religious rituals, but in the secular area and in scientific research. In this sense, we need to start investigating the person and work of Jesus Christ, as a historical, real person, essential to living human life and discovering the meaning of existence. So everyone will recognise and accept him more readily, while the Church will become the source and guardian of his words and deeds, the sacraments and the Holy

Spirit. Hagiotherapy can thus help atheists to discover the reality of God. While some people enter salvation through baptism in the Church, others receive it by the ‘baptism of desire’, through their efforts to choose goodness, truth, love and beauty, because this is the only way to help the human anthropological level. As we know, the neurosciences have shown that evil and sin, lies and hatred destroy brain cells, particularly affecting the anthropological spiritual soul. So, at the anthropological level, all people meet, all become able to discover the existence of God and find in him salvation and remedies for anthropological and theological illnesses.

As a professor and holder of the Chair in Fundamental Theology, I needed to investigate the relations between theological, anthropological and natural sciences, and encourage all scientific fields to meet. God is the Creator of us all. He loves us all; he sent his Son into the world to save us all. In my research, I was compelled to consider the wounded anthropological human sphere, and to devote myself to seeking remedies for these wounds. The development of this research and structuring of pathological discoveries and treatments led continually to new discoveries. I believe there is no end to this research, as

human beings are not just bodies, but spirits, and the essence of the spirit is freedom from time and space, from limitations and staticity. So hagiotherapeutic anthropology gives us an overall view, as from the top of a mountain, of the wide expanse of human life, from its physical to its spiritual-religious dimension. At the same time, it reveals the scientific need to explore the anthropological area, in order to discover efficacious remedies for holistic health, and provide a thorough insight into new methods of living and acting, whether of individuals, societies, or nations. Thus, hagiotherapy attempts to unite theological and philosophical research, in order to recognise the human condition and our woundedness at all levels, particularly the anthropological and theological.

International studies

International studies are an attempt to equip as many experts as possible to investigate the pathological states of the spiritual soul, and learn about new, improved treatments. At the same time, the aim of these studies is to inform all those studying hagiotherapy about the latest discoveries and therapeutic procedures. Finally, they serve to equip

people to be excellent hagioassistents, who can better recognise human woundedness and apply the most effective treatments.

The first international study took for its theme ‘Hagiotherapy – theory and practice, education and formation’ and was held from 6-11 July 2009 in Zagreb. The second, ‘Science and experience’, was held from 5-10 July 2010, also in Zagreb. The third, which is most often referred to by hagioassistents, was held in Zagreb from 4-9 July 2011, and tackled the topic ‘Mediating therapies in hagiotherapy’. The fourth, ‘Anthropological medicine and hagiotherapy’, was held from 2-7 July 2012. The fifth, ‘Basic and specialist hagiotherapy’ took place from 1-6 July 2013 in Zagreb. The sixth, ‘Expert areas in hagiotherapy and anthropological medicine’ was held in Zagreb from 30 June to 5 July 2014. Finally, the seventh international study, ‘Spirituality in hagiotherapy and religious medicine’, took place from 29 June to 4 July 2015. We expect the eighth international study in hagiotherapy to be held again in Zagreb from 4-9 July 2016. Its theme will be ‘Human anthropological woundedness’.

In contrast to hagiotherapy courses, which were at the theological, rather than the anthropological level, international studies are expe-

ssly anthropological and scientifically elaborated. Each presents a new aspect and new subject of research, and the contents of each are elaborated in study and scientific terms. On the one hand, they present new areas of pathology at the level of the spiritual soul and new treatment options, and on the other, provide practical instructions for the efficacious mediation of hagiotherapy and diagnosing pathology. Many of the contents can be found in my book, *Hagiotherapy in the Encounter with Man*, in the form of theoretical elaborations and practical demonstrations. However, the contents of the international studies are more wide-ranging and are therefore essential for proper work in hagiotherapy.

Institutionalising evangelisation and hagiotherapy

The beginnings of hagiotherapy and the evangelisation of the Church date back to the 1970s, though there were no formal rules or activities. It was only in the 1980s that we began to gather as a prayer community and felt the need for an institutional framework. At first, we called our-

selves *Molitvena Zajednica MiR* (Prayer Community MiR) but soon changed the name to *Zajednica Molitva i Riječ* (Community of Prayer and the Word). We realised that prayer was the source of our work in the Church and in society, and that inspired by it, we could be enabled to help others properly, through evangelisation and therapy. At that time, we approached the Archbishop's Office in Zagreb and sought approval and confirmation of our constitution, which were immediately granted. We then sought the same approval and confirmation of our constitution from the Croatian Bishops' Conference, and this was also obtained quickly. These approvals have been extended to the present day. So our community is a church institution.

After the Republic of Croatia became an independent state in 1990, we decided to conduct treatment and prayer activities, and in the August of that year, founded a civil association called *Centar za duhovnu pomoć* (Centre for Spiritual Help) in Zagreb. Our reputation spread quickly and the number of patients grew, so we needed to increase the number of workers in the association. Still, it was even more important to develop the therapeutic anthropological dimension, scientifically and practically. Four years later, at a se-

minar for a German-speaking audience in Stubičke Toplice, Croatia, I proposed a name for this new therapeutic work, ‘hagiotherapy’, and this was enthusiastically received. It was then necessary to develop this therapy from year to year, making it accessible to everyone, not only Christians. The rich structure of the human spiritual soul needed to be discovered in order to find ways of treating it and acting like Mother Theresa and many of the saints, i.e. using the power of grace and the Holy Spirit in us, free from liturgy, pastoral work and theology, in our work with people. A doctor does not need to explain to his patients where drugs come from and how they are made, and prescribes the same remedies to people of all persuasions. Prayerful, theological healing is fitting when leading a seminar for the evangelisation of the Church, i.e. the new evangelisation, held for Christians, while hagiotherapy must be independent of beliefs and convictions, so that it can be available to everyone on earth. Thus, hagiotherapy is anthropological medicine, while evangelisation is theological, or Christian faith-based. Just as Jesus healed all kinds of people without asking them about their faith or convictions, so hagiotherapy must demonstrate love for everyone. The strength for carrying out treatment which the hagioassistant gets from his relations-

hip with God, from the power of the Holy Spirit, is one thing, but the way he transmits it to his patients is another.

Soon after the establishment of the Centre in Zagreb, a number of other hagiotherapy centres began operating in Croatia and abroad. In Croatia today, there are over twenty, with suitable, recognisable names. There are others in Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, Korea, the US, the Netherlands and Ireland. Hagiotherapy is recognised more and more, is spreading, and is acknowledged as a method in anthropological medicine. It is increasingly sought after, and increasingly studied by those who wish to use it in individual problems or social turbulence. It operates at the level of the Spirit, and the Spirit is unconquerable, setting people free from all diseases, traumas and crises, and bringing life itself.

Hagiotherapy operates at two levels: individual and corporate. Treating individuals is known as microtherapy, and treating or working on social renewal is known as macrotherapy. Individual work is carried out by hagioassistents in hagiotherapy centres, and social therapy is carried out via the media, public meetings, seminars and panels.

It is extremely important to emphasise that hagiotherapeutic work can only be carried out by members of the Community of Prayer and the Word. This church institution conducts research, equips people for hagiotherapeutic activities, and also protects the method and the patients themselves from unqualified, false workers. The institution monitors the work of hagioassistents, requiring them to be highly prepared in theory and practice, and keeps records of their examinations, papers, research and progress. The Community of Prayer and the Word has registered the name of hagiotherapy and has the power to suspend or sanction anyone who tries to use it for their own purposes. We have had some such cases of ‘identity theft’, in which people with no expertise or connections with the Community have used the name hagiotherapy when working with patients, unlawfully making money and causing more harm than good. The Community has sued them and prohibited them from continuing. This is the only way to ensure proper work and patient trust. Medicine and psychiatry are similarly covered by state and scientific protection.

We have not only protected our work with patients using the hagiotherapy method, but also ensured that hagiotherapy centres cannot be

opened unless certain conditions are met. Any association which wishes to register as a hagiotherapy centre must obtain the approval the Community and a certificate. So it is necessary to join the Community, or found a branch of the Community, if a person wishes to work according to the method of hagiotherapy. All such branches are under the supervision of the National Community of Prayer and the Word, which comes under the auspices of the Head Community (*Vrhovna Zajednica*) in Zagreb. This structure, rules and form are common to all communities in the Church and state. This is the only way to preserve hagiotherapy from diversification and scandal, and to encourage ongoing excellence in high quality work with patients.

In hagiotherapy, it is important to make constant progress, to sit new exams, write papers, study books and manuals, and make notes on various experiences from practice with patients. But the most important thing is to apply everything one has learnt to oneself, acquiring greater confidence, which is the best way to mediate therapy and identify diagnoses. Hagiotherapy is developing constantly, so anyone who does not keep studying, reading or sitting exams will become less able to apply therapy effectively.

Mentors

It is particularly important, after passing exams and gaining years of experience, for hagioassistents to be promoted to mentors. Not only can mentors be brought into work with patients and help in dilemmas, but they can also be researchers and guardians of dignity and discipline in hagiotherapeutic work. They are also able to hold lectures and train new hagioassistents, spreading information about hagiotherapy and multiplying valuable workers. By holding panel discussions in places of learning and institutions, they can help people understand the concept of hagiotherapy and spread the word about it, particularly to those who may need it.

Hagiotherapy is still at the level of associations and volunteer work. So it is necessary to seek a certain level of acceptance from society, based on our expert work and results, so that it may be introduced gradually as a third branch of medicine, alongside the somatic and psychiatric aspects. This is why cooperation with doctors and psychiatrists is so important, so that potential prejudices and resistance can be overcome. Scientific papers and scholarly work are also needed,

such as doctoral dissertations and scholarly articles published in scientific journals.

In order for this work to succeed, in every country where hagiotherapy is practised, the Community of Prayer and the Word must be recognised by individual bishops, followed by the Bishops' Conference, as a lay church community working for the new evangelisation of the Church and society. The Community provides hagioassistents with the essential abilities to carry out successful treatment, because it mediates the Holy Spirit, without whom all work at the anthropological and spiritual level is impossible. In this context, the seventh international study, held in Zagreb in 2015, should be considered in particular. It taught the importance of distinguishing the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, nature, people and society from his work in the Church. In the world, the Spirit holds everything together, but in the Church, he mediates the salvation of Jesus and the redemption of humankind. Hagiotherapy heals, but the Church saves. Hagiotherapy mediates the power of the Spirit who is present in the world in creation, but the Church mediates the Spirit sent from the Father and the Son on the Day of Pentecost to complete the work of Jesus.

For a hagioassistant to open his heart to the power of the Holy Spirit, he must attend at least three seminars for the evangelisation of the Church, and then experience the so-called ‘Flash’ which widens and deepens the human soul for the action of the Spirit. Here, *Encounter with the Living God* is particularly helpful. Such seminars should be led by mentors in various hagiotherapy communities and centres.

However, it should be particularly emphasised that hagioassistents, and especially mentors, must clearly recognise and discover the truth that humankind cannot exist without God, and that nothing can exist or arise on Earth without close cooperation between people and God. A world without God is an abstract concept, as the German Protestant Dietrich Bonhoeffer said in the 20th century. The soul cannot be separated from the body; nor can God be separated from human beings. The matter from which plants and trees are made cannot be separated from the life force which transforms them into living, fruitful things. God has given us air and lungs, but it is up to us to breathe. We feed on inanimate food, but God transforms it into living, human tissue. People have their work on Earth, and God has his. They go together and cannot be separated. God and hu-

mankind are one, God and creation are one, because God does not just create, but also sustains all created things. He works and creates continually, giving functionality and abilities to people so that they too can be creative. Separating God from people, or the world from God, is an ideological blunder. We can separate the liturgical life of the Church from everyday life, but not God from people. God is just as present in the world as he is in the prayers of people and the Church.

The basic discovery of hagiotherapeutic research is that humankind, with the natural sciences, is living in delusion, and therefore in terrible suffering. The source of all pain and torment is separation from the Creator. Medicine and psychiatry, politics and science, technology and education, everyday life and upbringing, all try to achieve the desired results without God, and are constantly defeated, embarrassed, unsuccessful and gripped by evil. In spite of all this, society and the world at large resist God. Why? There is only one reason – to keep people enslaved to the Evil One, and to make sure they do not escape from the terrestrial ‘prison camp’ ruled by the prince of this world. Evil exerts all its strength to ensure that people remain separated from God. All ideologies, from the French Revolution, thro-

ugh the Enlightenment, Fascism, Nazism, Communism, Socialism, Neoliberalism and Neofascism, strive to clamp humankind in the chains of evil, hatred, division, immorality, battles against faith and the Church, creating a hell on earth, as one Croatian politician noted. We must be reasonable, wise, calm, devoted to goodness and morality, friends of God who love others, fighting with God's strength for each person. A new society with better conditions for life can only arise if we help others to escape from evil to goodness, from darkness to light, from hatred to love, from slavery to sin and the devil to the freedom of God's children. We should not divide people into good and bad, but aim to set them all free from evil and bring them into God's kingdom.

We are not alone on this journey. All of heaven is on our side. All the virtuous dead are with us and want to bring everyone into a life without evil and suffering, to friendship with Goodness, Truth, Beauty, full of Love. So it is important to help our generation, our brothers and sisters, our society and our world to find the door through which they can escape from slavery to the devil, evil, sickness, death, meaninglessness and darkness. They need to step out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, from

the devil's kingdom into the Kingdom of God. Let us remember that all creation, including the evil angels headed by Satan himself, are losing the battle, because they are mere creatures. Only God can conquer and salvation is in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, because he is God, not only man. We need to be aware of the exit from the prison camp of evil and slavery, and know where life in abundance can be found.

This is the truth and reality for which hagiotherapy strives. Victory is surely on our side. It is important that we speak to people with conviction, with good arguments, and triumphantly. This is why the discipline of Community of Prayer and the Word is important in hagiotherapy, and why each member should be aware of it. He or she enters into the reality of the Church in a conscious, tangible way, becoming united with the Body of Christ, the Church, even more closely. Communities and movements in the Church allow the laity to become consciously involved in the mission of the Church, and to discover and live out their special mission and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Bishops hold the competence and responsibility for evangelisation, so the laity must receive 'mandates' from the leadership of the Church so that they can participate in the power and mis-

sion of the Church in carrying out the new evangelisation, such as the Community of Prayer and the Word does through organising seminars for the new evangelisation. For hagiotherapy, people need the ‘mandate’ of the Community, since it is holds the competence and responsibility for hagiotherapy study and practice.

Hagiotherapy and psychotherapy

It is particularly important to draw a clear distinction between psychotherapy and hagiotherapy. The psyche is the link between the biological and the spiritual soul. We know it can be treated using psychopharmacology, but only up to a point, so that psychotherapy is also necessary. Even this is not enough. For this very reason, modern psychiatry seeks help from the human spiritual domain. However, it tends to regard the spirit as something which belongs to church and liturgy. It fails to see the Holy Spirit in nature and everything that exists, where the Spirit holds all things together. We need to distinguish the work of the Holy Spirit in nature and every detail of creation from the work of the Holy Spirit, given to the Church on the Day of Pentecost, who me-

diates salvation, redemption and participation in the nature of God himself.

It is just as important in hagiotherapy to be aware of the Holy Spirit who sustains all of nature, humankind and creation on the one hand, and the same Holy Spirit who is at work in the Church, setting the world free from slavery to sin and devil, from death, disease, and meaninglessness. Therefore it is important for hagioassistents to be filled with the personal friendship of the Holy Spirit, in order to free patients from anything which cannot be achieved through the power of nature. The Holy Spirit was sent to the Church to set us free from the Evil One and prepare us to participate in the nature of God. But we need to distinguish the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation from his work in healing. Jesus healed all illnesses and freed people from the influence of Evil, but this was not the same as salvation, which could only happen after Jesus' salvific death and resurrection. In addition, after the Holy Spirit descended upon them, the apostles addressed people and baptised them in the name of Jesus Christ, and at the same time, did what Jesus did, healing people without demanding that they prayed or were converted. It is important to understand that Je-

sus, after he was baptised in the River Jordan and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, and the apostles, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, healed people in the power of the same Spirit and gave them eternal life. This means that Jesus and the apostles healed in a hagiotherapeutic way, then brought Jesus' salvation to the whole world. Hagiotherapy is one task, but proclaiming redemption is the task of evangelisation. They cannot be separated, but they must be distinguished, so that prayer and liturgical rituals are never confused with hagiotherapeutic activities. They are two very different things. Hagiotherapy is a lay task, while evangelisation is the task of bishops and priests. This is a subtle, but important difference. If the two tasks are confused, neither therapy nor evangelisation results. It is important for the hagioassistant to learn how to think properly at the spiritual level, where only logical, precise thought processes can form the correct path to helping human suffering or people seeking salvation.

Management of the Community of Prayer and the Word

The Community of Prayer and the Word is managed at two levels. One is administrative, and the other is expert. The administrative leaders are the president and vice-president of the Community, or its director and assistant director. Practical administrative work is undertaken by the secretary's office. The people who work there do not need to be experts in hagiotherapy or evangelisation, but they must be members of the Community. This is how the Head Management Board operates in Zagreb, and the pattern is repeated in national communities and branches. The same type of administrative structure applies to hagiotherapy centres.

However, the most important thing is the expert work of the Community and hagiotherapy centres. Mentors are responsible for work in the area of evangelisation and also hagiotherapy. A mentor is a person who has grown spiritually in the Community by attending three seminars, has deepened their faith through the 'Flash' experience, has studied in detail *Encounter with the Living God* and *Hagiotherapy in the Encounter*

with Man, and has taken exams before a senior mentor. Then they must listen to recordings of all the international studies, day by day, so that they can grow in knowledge and practising procedures. Then they need to be thoroughly acquainted with leading seminars for evangelisation and the four periods: the first (Friday) devoted to God the Father and human existential topics, the second (Saturday) to Jesus Christ as the proclaimer of the Gospel, bearer of salvation and health, and healer of the mind and body, while on the Sunday, they need to be thoroughly acquainted with and transformed by the Holy Spirit.

Mentors must also be able to give lectures, hold panel discussions, and teach and lead courses on hagiotherapy and anthropological medicine. They must understand the roots of hagiotherapy, the human anthropological structure, the pathology of the spiritual soul, diagnoses, and treatment procedures. Mentors must therefore have at least five years' experience of working in seminars for evangelisation and working with patients, whether individually or in groups.

It is particularly important for mentors to know who the Holy Spirit is, to know the paths to discovering him, to know how he works, and

to draw a clear distinction between working in the power of the Holy Spirit in hagiotherapy, and evangelisation.

The first mentors in a country must have permission and a certificate from the Head Community, and the next ones from the national community. It is very important to emphasise that national communities, and of course the Head Community, must monitor the work of mentors and indeed all workers rigorously. Care should be taken to avoid divisions between management, whether administrative or expert, and individual workers. So it is important for each worker in evangelisation and hagiotherapy to be healed first himself of pride, vanity, judgmental attitudes and a lack of acceptance of others. You cannot evangelise if you have not been evangelised yourself, and you cannot heal others if you have not been healed yourself. Evil will try for hundreds of reasons to divide us, destroy our fellowship, separate us from God and particularly from the Holy Spirit. So it is important for the community in each country to have a certificate from the bishop for evangelisation, and one from the state for hagiotherapy. Obedience to the Founder of the Community of Prayer and the Word is inseparable from success in evangelisation and hagiotherapy. Obe-

dience and respect for the leader of the Community is a sign of obedience to the Founder. This management structure is extremely important if we want to succeed in our work. Disobedience is a basic barrier to working with hagiopatients and to evangelisation.

In all its work so far, the Community of Prayer and the Word has proved that no methods, no new forms of activity, no agreements, and no amount of effort can produce results, but only the power and intelligence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is important for members to grow continually in the Spirit, being changed by the demands of the Gospel, in a permanent relationship with God, in dialogue, communication and encounter with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They need to direct their conscious thoughts throughout the day towards the personal presence of Jesus Christ, and learn to listen and hear his voice. These are the ‘methods’, ‘forms’ and ‘ways’ which will surely lead to healing patients and converting people. So our primary, most important task is to learn, to pray, to hear God’s voice, to understand the calling of the Holy Spirit, the voice of the Kingdom of God. All diseases and suffering have arisen because of disobedience to God, enmity with him, and separation from him. This is why we were

driven out of paradise, into the death camp which is the Earth, into slavery to sin and the Evil One. This is why we have been deprived of our rights, made incapable, aggressive and evil. We need to return to paradise, to the living God through Jesus Christ and other people. And this is the spiritual life of the community. This needs to be done, without omission. Learning and communicating with God.

Scientific tasks of hagiotherapy

The basic task of hagiotherapy is to reunite God and human beings, setting them free from slavery to death, sin and the Evil One, which means deepening spiritual life, restoring the lost spiritual dimension, and achieving full unity between them and God. There is only one way forward for the new humanity - establishing communication and living in harmony with the Creator. We need to acknowledge the mistake of the first people and accept the forgiveness, restoration, salvation and redemption which Jesus Christ brings. This is the only way to escape the prison and slavery of Earth, and anything else is simply shifting around inside the prison. All our efforts

lead to nothing new, they cannot set us free or save us, but they can lead us astray. There is only one way to freedom – the encounter between humankind and God. This is the work of the Community of Prayer and the Word, and this is the desire of hagiotherapy and evangelisation. Hagiotherapy shows us people, with all their strengths and weaknesses, while evangelisation shows us God, with all his wonderful plans to set people free. We need to break off from ideological running away from God, and emerge from the death camp into the freedom of life. This is the vision of hagiotherapy and evangelisation, and of the Community of Prayer and the Word, so we must remain faithful to the Community in order to bring the world, through the Church, the vision and reality of freedom from evil and freedom to do good.

God and human beings are inseparable. God's nature and our nature are the same – we breathe God's air, through God's lungs, we see with our eyes what God has given us and the light he has created. We move through a nature created by God, we eat, drink and live in what God has given us. If we stop breathing, we die. If we stop eating or drinking, or close our eyes, we are either dead or blind. Try leaving nature, if you can. Is it not obvious that life consists of God's reality and

our acceptance of that reality? The whole tragedy of this earth and humankind is our rejection of cooperation with God. So the members of the Community of Prayer and the Word are actually on the sure path to the liberation of humankind. This vision is important and must be turned into reality. All evil will cease, and good begin.

Words and deeds

That is not all! People are great thinkers, perhaps geniuses, but do not change themselves or the world as a result. They speak, metaphorically, deeply, intelligently, but do not change themselves or the world. It is all just abstract, whether thoughts or words. But when they do what they think or say, then they can change themselves and the world. Long words in seminars will change no-one. They may fascinate for a while, but after a few minutes, the old chains are back. When a person begins to think and speak from experience and practice, because they have implemented their thoughts and words in real life, others will follow him. The essence of hagiotherapy and the new evangelisation, as a charisma, which means a task

given by God, is to implement the knowledge of anthropology and theology in practice. We must first experience healing and be evangelised ourselves, then we will be able to be hagioassistents and evangelists. Remember, Jesus thought God's thoughts, and fascinated people with his words, yet they were not converted, and actually sought to kill him. When he entered into the practice of death and resurrection, when he stopped speaking and devoted himself to achieving what he had declared was his mission, then the apostles were converted by the power of the Holy Spirit and the historical march of the Church began. When a hagio-assistent is healed of his serious traumas and imagined goodness, when an evangelist admits that he is not really in Jesus, just spreading his own thoughts and words, then evangelisation can begin. In *Evangelii nuntiandi* Pope Paul VI said that a person can begin to evangelise only when he has himself been evangelised.

The Community of Prayer and the Word must begin its work here, so that it may show the world the beginnings of a new world and witnessing Church.

The Church

It is also extremely important for members of the Community of Prayer and the Word to understand what the Church is, and to love it without reserve. The Church has two dimensions, one institutional, and the other divine. In the institutional sense, it is necessary for the Church to have visible leadership and administrative services. These are bishops, priests and deacons. The divine dimension is the fact that the Church is the Body of Jesus Christ, in which the faithful are the Body, and Christ the Head. In the institutional sense, the Church provides the opportunity to live and act in the world. In the divine sense, it has the power to offer people everything Jesus did for the salvation of the world. The danger lies in thinking of the Church as a merely human institution, as though omnipotence and grace depended on the lives, morals and holiness of the members, particularly the clergy. The full strength of the Church lies in the sacraments and Sacred Scripture. The sacraments are God's omnipotence entrusted in Holy Ordination to bishops and priests, as visible servants of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ. So a priest can impart all the mercies of Christ unblemished, regardless of his personal morals

or holiness. He is the channel, not the source of the saving grace of Christ and the sacraments. In him is Jesus who saves, in him is all the wealth of the Church, and from bishops and priests comes all that that Church has from God for the world. The priest has within himself the power to forgive sins, to turn the Eucharistic emblems into the body and blood of Christ, to distribute the sacraments and save people. The Church is in the servants of the Head of the Church, in bishops and priests. Similarly, the Church is in every baptised believer, from whom a host of mercies flow to those among whom he or she lives. It is important to remember this vital difference between the institutional and the divine Church. Otherwise, if we regard the Church simply as an institution, then we do not receive Christ's power and are ready to criticise the Church, be offended by the way priests live their lives, and leave. The Church is Jesus – this is the essence. The Church is the presence of Jesus among us, beyond all history. If we know this, we will love the Church and invest in it, because Jesus lives in it and in us.

If we understand this, we will realise why Jesus told his apostles, “Whoever despises you, despises me. Whoever listens to you, listens to me”. At the same time, we will clearly understand that

the Community of Prayer and the Word, with the tasks entrusted to it by Jesus Christ through the Church, i.e. evangelisation and hagiotherapy, is in fact the Church, and like other movements, orders and societies, is an organ of the Church with a specific task to accomplish. The connection of the Church and Jesus Christ is the basic condition under which we can carry out hagiotherapy and evangelisation with enthusiasm and the conviction that this is the way to eternal life and the renewal of the world.

In doing so, let us be aware that our relationship with the Church and Jesus Christ is both highly scientific and highly secular. There is one world, one being. Remember, nuns work as nurses and doctors in hospitals. They use scientific methods, but at the same time, live in complete unity with Jesus Christ and the Church. Remember, too, that theological faculties throughout Europe and the world are members of secular, state universities, and theology is a scholarly field within the humanities. We need to shed the ideological absurdities of the last three hundred years in Europe, from the French Revolution, Fascism, Nazism, Communism, the Socialist Internationale and leftist modern Fascism. Ideologies are the enemies of science and truth. In fact, the Church itself foun-

ded many universities and scientific methods, and the future development of knowledge lies within the Church. I believe that our work and research is paving the way to future truths and knowledge in the world.

I stress this because there will always be attacks and people who run from the centre and the truth to the left or right. This means some will try to be completely secular, without the Spirit, while others will want to be completely religious, without science. Only the combination of science and the Spirit can lead to excellent research and sure results. Only there are full life and holistic therapy at all levels.

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About the author



Tomislav Ivančić (born 1938) is a Croatian theologian and academic. Ivančić was born in Davor, Croatia. After the study of philosophy and theology in Zagreb and Rome he was ordained priest of the Zagreb Archdiocese in 1966. After achieving a doctorate at the Papal Gregorian University in Rome, he returned to Zagreb to become professor at the Catholic-Theological Faculty of the University of Zagreb. He is head of the Chair of Fundamental Theology, was one of the editors of the magazine “Bogoslovska smotra” (Theologian’s Review), is member of the editorial boards and associate of many Croatian and foreign theology magazines and member of the Croatian Literary Translators’ Association. Since 1983 he is canon of Zagreb’s Cathedral Chapter.

The areas of his scientific work are philosophy, theology and literature. The area of his special interest is the research of men’s existential-spiritual dimension, in which he discovers new possibilities and ways of modern evangeli-

sation and the need of developing spiritual medicine, which - next to somatic and psychiatric medicine - is indispensable in the holistic healing of man, and especially in healing spiritual illnesses and addictions. For this purpose he developed the method of hagiotherapy and founded the Centre for Spiritual Help in 1990 in Zagreb, which he is the head of.

Apart from working at the Faculty, since 1971 Tomislav was also a religious teacher for students in Zagreb, the initiator of the prayer movement in the Church in Croatia, founder of the religious community "Prayer and Word" (Zajednica "Molitva i Riječ") and the "Centre for a Better World", as well as lecturer at numerous seminars for the spiritual renewal in Croatia and abroad. In the last decade he has been training persons to work in centres for spiritual help and hold seminars for the apostolate of evangelisation in Croatia and abroad.

His scientific and expert articles are published in Croatian and foreign magazines. He wrote more than 50 books, of which almost the half was translated into foreign languages, whereas some have been published only in foreign languages. His book "Follow Me" (Pođi za mnom) was translated in 12 languages. He was editor-in-chief of

the magazine “Steps” (Koraci), and then “New Steps” (Novi koraci), as well as founder of the magazine “Hagiotherapy” (Hagioterapija).

From 1998 until 2001 he was dean of the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Zagreb. In September 2001 he was elected rector of the University of Zagreb, but he resigned in December 2001.[1]

On 9 February 2004 Pope John Paul II designated him member of the International Theological Commission,[2] presided over by the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, today’s Pope Benedict XVI.

Ivančić is author and host of a very popular radio program “Lord, teach us to pray” which is broadcast during the academic year.

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