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Dar obecności osób chorych i umierających. Z perspektywy kapelana szpitala i hospicjum The gift of the presence of the sick and the dying. From the perspective of the hospital chaplain and the hospice

Słowa kluczowe: obecność, cierpienie, kapelan szpitala i hospicjum

Key words: presence, suffering, hospital chaplain and hospice

Abstrakt

Uzmysłowienie sensu i zrozumienie natury cierpienia staje się coraz ważniejsze w obliczu złożoności doznań, na które narażony jest człowiek w każdym okresie swego życia. Waga uświadomienia sobie cierpienia innych osób – czerpanie z doświadczeń, które daje empatyczne uczestniczenie w cierpieniach osób chorych, ich rodzin, dzieci i młodocianych nabiera szczególnego znaczenia w miarę upowszechniania właściwej opieki, której zadaniem jest zrozumienie i wspieranie cierpiących osób.

Szpital czy hospicjum to miejsca, gdzie bardzo ostro dotyka się tych rzeczywistości ludzkiego istnienia i przemijania. Łatwo jest spotkać się, by mówić o cierpieniu, to prawda, ale zdecydowanie trudniej jest poradzić sobie z własnym cierpieniem, bądź uczestniczyć w cierpieniu drugiego człowieka. To naprawdę jest sztuką.

Making sense and understanding the nature of suffering becomes increasingly important in the face of the complexity of the sensations that a person is exposed to at every stage of his or her life. The importance of recognizing the sufferings of others – learning from the experiences that empower the sick, their families, children and adolescents to take part in the suffering is of particular importance as it promotes proper care for the understanding and support of suffering people.

When we find out that we are ill, that the research has shown one or other disease in the body, then we are born with fear and uncertainty. The question arises very quickly – why, then what will be next?

Well, when do we get information that we are terminally ill? Medicine is helpless, it can only help God now – hear such or similar statements from the mouth of doctors. Can not the whole world ruin his whole life? Maybe, and most often, it's going to be a storm, at least for a while. Let us now close our eyes for a moment and think to ourselves, "I am incurable sick, dying, there is no cure for me"! Is not that easy?! Hospitals or hospices are places where the reality of human existence and passing is very acute. It is easy to meet to talk about suffering, it is true, but it is far more difficult to cope with one's own suffering or to share in the suffering of another. It really is art.

What is suffering?

Suffering – unpleasant, painful feelings conditioned by loss, illness, especially long-term, progressive, life-threatening. The source of suffering is all these unfortunate experiences, experiences that lower the quality of life, disintegrate into the whole of the human person, not only the body (somatic symptoms) but all areas of human existence: thinking, emotion, social ties, financial situation and above all the wounded spirituality (existential pain). The suffering of the sufferer is often accompanied by a feeling of hopelessness, in the face of successive irreversible losses (loss of health, role in life, work, friends, capacity to create, faith in God, in people). The feeling of bitterness due to unfulfilled life may be accompanied by low self-esteem and loss of faith in the further meaning of life¹. Little is said about the sufferers and the suffering. The presence of these people teaches us sensitivity and develops this sensitivity in us. Suffering is a mystery. Ks. Dr. Jerzy Smoleń, a psychologist from Ignatianum, writes about communication in the areas of human suffering, very rightly observes that "the quality of interpersonal communication is decisively determined by intrapersonal communication, and therefore everything that is within me. It means that as a person I participate in communication within myself on three levels: psychic, physical and spiritual. Each of these planes has its share of intrapersonal and first interpersonal communication. It is impossible to "function" well "by eliminating" any of these planes. Through an inner dialogue, a person becomes aware of the essence of his being, thus developing his subjectivity. Very much depends on this intrapersonal triad. The harmony of this triad, or lack of it, significantly affects the quality of interpersonal communication. What is within me is the basis of my relationships².

Looking from the perspective of a 12 year old on my ministry as hospital chaplain and hospice, I have to honestly say that in seeking answers to the question of what suffering is, many times I had to face myself first. How was the other thing in me, from what I experienced in contact with the sick man. The patient can not be deceived. He immediately senses

¹ N. Cherny, N. Coyle, K. Foley, Suffering in the advanced cancer patient: a definition and taxonomy. *Journal of Palliative Care*, New York 1994, s. 57-70.

² J. Smoleń, *Komunikacja w przestrzeniach ludzkiego cierpienia* [w:] M. Kujawski (red.), *Idea hospicjum i jej zastosowanie w duszpasterstwie dziś*, Radom 2007, s. 33.

our tiredness, our irritability. He senses when he is tired and when he does not. He senses our fear and our peace. He knows when we tell him the truth, and when we consolingly comfort him. He senses when something overcomes us when we do not know the answer and we speak to speak, or we quickly send to Christ. He senses what matters he can not talk to us at all, because they are far away. Such meetings are always very demanding. It teaches honesty in touch. It primarily forces a fair look at one another. It forces us to first ask ourselves questions about our existence, our suffering and our passing.

The triple dimension of the value of suffering

Suffering brings up the suffering of the suffering person, if it allows, also the One who carries on and educates the society. Man is touched by suffering less selfish, more sensitive. In suffering, we are united, we support, we give ourselves. Through suffering, society learns the nobility of being. Children learn to understand parents who are aging. True society does not exist without suffering people. Those suffering are needed by society. I often wondered why we suffer so quickly with a sick man? So soon we burn in this ministry. In my opinion, the reason lies in the fact that we do not really learn a sick person, but we constantly adapt it to our areas and ways of functioning. I remember an event that I think illustrates well what I would like to say. Once, a Woman in Hospice wrote me a piece of paper saying, "How much time? I do not know and do not feel it. I want to get up, get dressed and go. Go for a walk. But first he wants to get dressed. For the pain I want. I want to wear pants, or a long skirt and a blouse or a sweater. I want to have a look. I want to look, have a dress, shoes. Just shoes. Have shoes and go. Go for a walk and on the way to break the blooming apple twigs, go with the other Man. How beautiful would that be? My thoughts hurt from those dreams. I can not get up, I can not get dressed, I can not go for two years. And how long? I dream of blouses, pantyhose, sweaters, things that have become alien to me. I would like to touch them, stroking, lie next to each other, look at them and nothing else. I'm free of life. Out of life. Thinking about the sufferer, those who care for him and the society wants to say that it takes time to sit down and talk to the sick person, and usually just listen, listen and listen. We forget that a sick person has the right to shout out his pain, even to God himself. The situation in which he is not at all simple, is not easy, to say the least. In addition, a sick person staying at home all the time, is tired of the silence and loneliness. For such a person the walls of the apartment, the room with every day and night, full of loneliness, simply come closer. That is when unwanted thoughts come. Every one of us, and only a man with an incurable illness, desperately needs a sense of acceptance, security. Offering someone your time is the greatest proof of being for that person. St. Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Ephesians: "It is better to be silent and to be than to speak, not to be³.

³ Św. Ignacy Antiocheński, List do Efezjan, za: Liturgia Godzin, T III, poniedziałek 2 tygodnia Okresu Zwyczajnego.

To be with another man. Give him his time and himself as he is the greatest gift. To be, it's an art that you have to learn every day. Being virtuous is bound to be the virtue of patience, and with it the acceptance of the limitation of the suffering.

When we are with a sick person, we must also remember that the help should be organized integrally, ie on the already mentioned three levels: psychic, physical and spiritual. We can not override any of these planes. They form the whole. Most often, however, we focus on the physical, thus making a mistake. Meanwhile, the harmony of this triad has important implications for the quality of the functioning of every human being, the more sick.

How many people forget that spirituality is important for a believer. Every day, or at least often receive Holy Communion, use the help of spiritual confessor, broadcast Mass. or any other service through radio or television, this is a great event for the suffering man. We can not forget about it. I must say that for non-believers, these areas over time are not meaningless.

Proposals for the future

It would be good if the subject of suffering was the subject of reflection in various areas of the humanities. For suffering is not only the one who studies nursing, physiotherapy or medical rescue. Maybe it would be possible to focus on the subject of suffering at various levels of school and university. There is no education about suffering, it is not in fashion. Today is not in the price of suffering. Everyone wants to be attractive. I once invited high school students, where I taught religion, to go with me to Hospice to visit my colleague, who died of cancer in the hospice ward. I heard the answer: please priest and what shall we talk to him about?

Finally, as a summary, I will be able to offer you a text that once happened to be in my hands accidentally, entitled "Blessings of the Old Man":

Blessed are those who understand that my legs are now walking slower and my hands trembling.

Blessed are those who think that my ears are not good to hear and that I do not understand everything.

Blessed are those who know that my eyes are no longer visible.

Blessed are they who will not think to me when something falls out of my hands and who helps me find my things.

Blessed are they who smile to me and talk with me in a chat.

Blessed are those who see my afflictions and try to minimize my suffering.

May they be blessed, who allow me to feel that I am loved and who feel affectionately with me.

Blessed are those who stay with me when I go the way to eternity.

Blessed are all who are good to me. They help me think of a good God.

And I will not forget them, when will I ever be with him?

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Summary

The realization of sense and understanding of the nature of suffering is becoming increasingly important in the face of the complexity of the sensations that man is exposed to at every stage of his life. The importance of recognizing the sufferings of others – learning from the experiences that empower the sick, their families, children and adolescents to take part in the suffering is of particular importance as it promotes proper care for the understanding and support of suffering people.

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