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**Review: C. Mitch, E. Sri, *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza. Katolicki Komentarz do Pisma Świętego* (orig. *The Gospel of Matthew: Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture*), transl. E. Litak, W drodze, Poznań 2019, pp. 428**

The development of Bible studies in recent decades, especially after the Second Vatican Council, has led to a deeper understanding of many biblical texts and to the encouragement of Scripture reading. The interpretation was, however, at times erroneous. While some of such instances have been almost eliminated (e.g. materialistic reading of the Bible or reading in the spirit of liberation theology), others are still present, and new directions of interpretation are emerging that can lead to a dead end. It is often the case that while the radical form of the proposed interpretation method or approach to an inspired text must be rejected, the moderate mode of the method or approach may prove enriching for Bible studies. Examining these interpretations and selecting what is useful for Bible studies and in line with the Church's centuries-old tradition is one of the challenges faced by theologians, Biblicists, exegetes.

Undoubtedly, this task was met by the authors of the commentary to the Gospel according to St Matthew: Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, American Catholic Biblical scholars. The book is intended not only for biblicists or theologians engaged in scholarly work, but above all for people involved in pastoral ministry. It is dedicated to the Gospel according to St Matthew, the first book in the canonical order of the New Testament. This Gospel was one of the most read books of the Bible in the first centuries of Christianity. The inspired author addressed his work to Christians of Jewish origin. Realizing the importance of the Pentateuch for the Judaic religion, he included in his Gospel five great speeches of Jesus. The very idea of the five speeches already

carries a message: the good news of salvation becomes a new Torah (the Pentateuch), while Jesus becomes a new Moses – the Lawgiver. While the first Law was brought by Moses, who received it from Yahweh in the Sinai theophany, the new Law is revealed by Jesus.

The authors of the commentary already in the introduction refer to these five speeches of Jesus as a structuring element for the whole Gospel. In addition, they discuss the problem of authorship, the recipients, the dates and places of origin and emphasize the essential message of the Gospel of Matthew. The introduction therefore includes a discussion of all the introductory points that should be included in the complete commentary to each of the Bible books. The novelty is the emphasis put on the Gospel message for the contemporary reader, which is an outstanding testimony to the pastoral value of the commentary.

After the pattern of the Gospel of Matthew was determined, the authors proceed to systematically comment on individual pericopes based on the devised structure. The commentary to each of the fragments has been arranged according to a clear plan: (I) a short introduction; (II) translation of a Gospel text; (III) its explanation; (IV) reflection on it and practical application. The clarity of this plan makes the reading much easier. In their explanations, Mitch and Sri reach for the latest developments in Bible studies. The reader will find here threads referring to the history of ancient Israel, archaeology, geography, and the religion professed by Jesus as well as references to social customs and everyday life in Palestine of the first century are frequent. Very helpful in understanding some parts of the Gospel are etymological explanations. Some terms occurring in the text have been highlighted, which makes it easier to grasp the essence of the message of individual pericopes.

The book is written in beautiful, understandable and very communicative language. Credit for it is due not only to the authors, but also to the translator, Eliza Litak.

At the end of the volume there is a dictionary of the most important terms that were understandable to the original recipients of the Gospel of Matthew (Christians of Jewish origin), and may be difficult for today's readers, who do not necessarily know all the customs, practices and beliefs of the followers of Palestinian Judaism of the first century. The bibliography at the end of the book is also valuable. For more attentive readers, it indicates sources where they can find more information on topics of interest to them, which were raised by Mitch and Sri. For pastoral purposes, an *Index of Pastoral Topics* and an *Index of Highlighted Texts* were added. The graphic beauty of the publication is enhanced by the inclusion of seven carefully selected illustrations.

The Second Vatican Council encouraged frequent reading of Sacred Scripture “to promote that warm and living love for scripture” (SC 24), so that all could

“hold fast to the Sacred Scriptures through diligent sacred reading and careful study, all who are legitimately active in the ministry of the word (...) so that none of them will become ‘an empty preacher of the word of God outwardly, who is not a listener to it inwardly’” (DV 25), while “the treasures of the bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God’s word” (KL 51). The book prepared by the always reliable publishing house *W drodze* definitely meets this conciliatory encouragement.

During the meeting with the Pontifical Theological Commission John Paul II said:

The People of God need such exegetes who, on the one hand, will do their scholarly work very honestly, on the other hand, will not stop halfway, but, on the contrary, will continue their efforts until the treasures of light and life contained in the Scriptures are fully revealed, so that the shepherds and the faithful have easier access to them and benefit more abundantly from their fruits (11 April 1991).

There is no doubt that the commentary to the Gospel according to St Matthew will be of great help to biblicists, theologians and exegetes, as well as to the faithful wishing to learn more and more about the content of Revelation contained in Scripture, either alone or in study groups.