

Theses

1. The lifestyle of postmodern man in the 21st century has undergone a radical change. Man has not been able to get safely integrated into this new lifestyle. The disintegration of traditional family structures, the increasingly frequent isolation of the individual, the lack of role models to identify with, as well as the resulting problems of identity have led to the growth of existential anxiety. The previously available tools that could ease anxiety – faith, religion, communities, the sense of belonging to a larger group, living in big families and being surrounded by social structures – more and more belong to the deficit of life. Anxiety is further intensified by the fear that one's life will end up being meaningless.
2. According to the Scripture, man's uncertainties in life are resolved in the relationship with God, in the sense of being in communion with Him. In this relationship, one can experience their anxiety and fear without shame, because they can openly share such feelings with the Lord. There are examples that support this in the Psalms: "My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O Lord—how long?" (Psalms 6:4/b); "But you, O Lord, be gracious to me, and raise me up" (Psalms 41:5); "Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck." (Psalms 69:2). In contrast to postmodern man, those who lived in Biblical times were able to live with their anxieties because they could openly express those feelings before God, and could expect hope and absolution.
3. For Christians, the recognition, interpretation and solutions of anxiety are based on the theological approach. Theology views anxiety as a given phenomenon within existence, provided by God. This is significant because the reality of anxiety can only be understood before the Lord. According to this approach, anxiety is not a phenomenon that is alien to life, but a fundamental attribute of human existence. The created man's life cannot be separated from anxiety, as anxiety first and foremost means the feeling of existing within certain limits. The Scripture does not portray this feeling as something that makes people ill, but as the recognised attribute of the relationship between man and God. That is why man is humble towards the Creator (O. Haendler).

4. The existential realisation of non-existence leads to anxiety. In humans, there are three ways in which non-existence threatens existence:

- a. anxiety about death – ontic self-affirmation;
- b. anxiety about meaninglessness – spiritual self-affirmation;
- c. anxiety about perdition – moral self-affirmation.

All three forms of anxiety and self-affirmation are existential and not pathological phenomena. Anxiety becomes pathological when a person does not acknowledge their existential anxieties and escapes into neurosis to avoid hopelessness (P. Tillich).

5. Pastoral psychology has recognised that the deepening of anxiety and its transformation into a pathological phenomenon are mainly caused by the lack of relationships: the loss or deterioration of personal connections, and their increasingly uncertain nature. Therefore, the primary form of help that pastoral psychology needs to offer is the restoration and healing of these damaged relationships of trust (John 4:12) – with God and with fellow humans. In the pastoral care of a person suffering from anxiety – both on the level of the individual and that of the community – both parties need an emotional basis of trust that can lead to healing: the restoration of the relationships with God and others.