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“Shall I show joy or sorrow?” (Poem 31). Pain of Loss – a Study of Paulinus of Nola’s Works²

In the life of Pontius Meropius Anicius Paulinus (ca. 354-431), known more as Paulinus of Nola, there were at least two painful losses of loved ones that left an imprint on his life and marked his work, preserved in the form of 52 letters and 33 poems³. These losses changed Paulinus’ life and certainly influenced his answer to the question “Shall I show joy or sorrow?”. At first glance, it sounds bizarre, but he also asked this question in the face of the loss of close people he corresponded with and who he comforted through his letters⁴. At the moment of his baptism, Paulinus, educat-

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³ See S. Costanza, *Aspetti autobiografici nell’opera poetica di Paolino di Nola*, in: *Forma Futuri. Studi in onore del Card. M. Pellegrino*, Torino 1975, p. 454-471 = *Aspetti autobiografici nell’opera poetica di Paolino di Nola*, „Giornale Italiano di filologia” 27/6 (1975) p. 265-277.

⁴ Generally on the topic of Christian *consolatio* in Paulinus’ writings, see L.F. Pizzolato, *La „consolatio” cristiana per la morte nel sec. IV. Riflessioni metodologiche e tematiche*, „Civiltà Classica e Cristiana” 6 (1985) p. 441-474; L.F. Pizzolato, *Morir giovani. Il pensiero antico di fronte allo scandalo della morte prematura. Letture cristiane del Primo Millennio XXII*, Milano 1996 (on Paulinus see p. 174-182); J.-M. Vercaussee, *Le chrétien face à la mort d’après Paulin de Nole (Epistula 13 et Carmen 31)*, „Connaissance des Pères de l’Église” 123 (2011) p. 50-60; J.-M. Vercaussee, *Quand la consolation latine se drape dans un voile chrétien... chez Paulin de Nole*, in: *Littérature narrative et consolation. Approches historiques et théoriques*, ed. E. Poulain-Gautret, Arras 2012, p. 75-87;

ed on good classical models and thus familiar with the Stoic philosophy, entered a world where, on the one hand, there was purely human grief over the passing and death of relatives, and on the other, the joy of their passage to God, to a better world, filled with Christian hope.

Unfortunately, we do not have any sources about Paulinus' experiencing pain of loss from the years before his conversion, so we can only rely on his Christian experience of parting with others. It is worth seeing how the writings of this promising statesman, poet, and finally priest, bishop, and monk living at the tomb of St. Felix, show the loss and passing away of another person and what advice he gives to those who experience such loss. This is all the more so since the fame and voice of Paulinus spread throughout the world at that time and found recipients and followers, and he was repeatedly praised as a master of the spiritual life⁵.

1. My passions

The first of these losses, perhaps around 392, was the death of his eight-day-old son, Celsus, in Spain, where Paulinus lived for a while with his wife Therasia. We do not know much about this event, but Celsus is mentioned in the poetic *consolatio* addressed to Pneumatius and his wife Fidelis on the death of their child whose name was Celsus as well. A few years after his death, the pain of the loss of their firstborn son surely being enormous, all the more so as the baby was a long-anticipated child. In invoking words to the deceased Celsus, Paulinus portrayed the sadness related to the death of his Celsus: "[...] like our own boy who bore your blessed name and who was summoned the moment he was bestowed. He was a child long desired

M. Wysocki, *Chrześcijańska nadzieja w listach konsolacyjnych (św. Ambroży, św. Augustyn, św. Hieronim, św. Paulin)*, in: *Nadzieje upadającego świata. Nadzieja w chrześcijańskiej epistolografii łacińskiej IV i V wieku (Ambroży, Augustyn, Hieronim, Paulin z Noli)*, ed. M. Wysocki – J. Pałucki – M. Pyzik-Turska, Lublin 2019, p. 217-234.

⁵ See Augustinus, *Ep.* 26, 5; Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* I 10, 53; Ambrosius, *Ep.* 27, 1-3; Sulpicius Severus, *Vita sancti Martini Turonensis* 25, 4. Cf. A. Ruggiero, *San Paolino maestro di fede e di vita*, Napoli – Roma 1994; S. Costanza, *I rapporti tra Ambrogio e Paolino di Nola*, in: *Ambrosius Episcopus, Atti del Congresso internazionale di Studi ambrosiani nel XVI centenario della elevazione di Sant'Ambrogio alla cattedra episcopale*, v. 2, ed. G. Lazzati, Milano 1976, p. 220-232.

but not awarded to us, since we were unworthy to rejoice in the devotion of progeny”⁶.

He explains the loss of the desired child due to his unworthiness, because offspring are a reward that Paulinus and Therasia did not deserve to have. Perhaps it is worth looking at these words in the broader context of Paulinus’ life. The poem to console Pneumatius and Fidelis was probably written in Nola, where Paulinus, after his conversion, settled down with his wife, leading a monastic life. It is commonly admitted that the death of Celsus was one of the reasons for the complete transformation of Paulinus, his conversion and the decision to abandon his goods and settle in a small town near Naples at the tomb of the martyr Felix. Paulinus writes *Consolatio* from the position of a converted Christian, but remembers the times when he did not yet follow the path of Christ and did not serve his spiritual father Felix. Perhaps, therefore, this unworthiness and hopelessness are related precisely to yet incomplete conversion and a weak faith at the time when they were given a son, it is before the beginning of their monastic life at the tomb of St. Felix. They buried him in Complutum, alongside the martyrs Justus and Pastor, “so that with the blood of the saints close by he may sprinkle our souls when they are in the fire after death”⁷.

These words still show sadness and a kind of bitterness, leading to fear for their salvation. However, from the point of view after conversion, words full of hope come from Paulinus: “We believe that he shares your joyful life, sporting with you in eternal glades”⁸ or “It is certain that the kingdom of heaven belongs to children such as you were in age, purpose, and faith, like our own boy”⁹. Here it seems that Paulinus poetically divides time as before and after his conversion, and only this gives him hope and joy.

The second loss, mentioned in the writings of Paulinus, was the loss of his brother, about whom we learn from two of Paulinus’ letters (*Ep.* 35 and 36), which he surely sends shortly after his brother’s death to his spiritual father, Bishop Delphinus, and to a friend, at that time the priest Amandus,

⁶ Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 600-604, tr. P.G. Walsh, *The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola*, Ancient Christian Writers 40, New York – Ramsey 1975, p. 328.

⁷ Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 609-610, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 329.

⁸ Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 605-606, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 328.

⁹ Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 599-601, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 328.

the later Bishop of Bordeaux and successor of Delphinus¹⁰. Both are from around 390-392. The tragedy to the death of the unknown by name brother of Paulinus is added by the theory adopted by researchers about the tragic death of his brother, the result of murder¹¹, as evidenced by the words of Paulinus in *Natalicium* of 407 AD, several years after the tragic events:

When I was troubled by the bloody slaughter of my own brother, and this case of my brother was bringing hazard to me as a blood relation, and a purchaser was already laying hands on my property, you, my father, removed the sword from my throat and the treasury officials from my estate. You kept me and my possessions in trust for Christ the Lord¹².

The letters that were written, as Paulinus says when “my fresh grief at being sundered from my brother causes me deep anxiety”¹³, show a man mourning the loss of a loved one and concerned for his salvation. It should be mentioned that both Paulinus and his brother were baptized by Delphinus¹⁴. Paulinus gratefully accepts the bishop’s letter, which is “full of great affection”¹⁵ that he awaits in this difficult time, a time of pain¹⁶. Yet, he does not want to talk about the experienced drama, thus shortening the letter to the most important words, because, as he writes, “Yet ‘all things have their season’, and since this is a time of mourning, it seems also a time for saying little”¹⁷. In the face of his brother’s death, of mourning and a letter from a friend, the most important thing for Paulinus is to care for his brother’s salvation:

I earnestly confess that I am grieved not so much at my brother’s bodily death as at his spiritual indifference. He was more mindful of the anxieties which

¹⁰ The theory is that this second letter was written at a later time, after the death of his next brother.

¹¹ V. Moricca, *La morte violenta di un fratello di Paolino di Nola*, „Didaskaleion” 4 (1926) p. 85-90; H. Sivan, *The Death of Paulinus’ brother*, „Rheinisches Museum für Philologie” 139/2 (1996) p. 170-179.

¹² Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 21, 416-420, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 186.

¹³ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 36, 2, Walsh, *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola*, v. 2, Ancient Christian Writers 36, New York – Ramsey 1967, p. 174.

¹⁴ See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 35.

¹⁵ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 35, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 2, p. 172.

¹⁶ See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 35.

¹⁷ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 35, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 2, p. 172.

he had to abandon here than of the cures to which he could look forward in heaven; he advanced the secondary things and relegated the primary”¹⁸.

That is why in his pain he asks Delphinus to pray with fatherly affection for the deceased and thus beg for mercy and refreshment. In the second letter to his friend Amandus, Paulinus also describes his state of mind as “fresh grief [...] and deep anxiety”¹⁹. The former is of course caused by the loss of his brother, but the latter, like in the letter to Delphinus, is primarily due to concern for his brother’s salvation. Paulinus writes:

I know that he has been taken only from this world and only for a time, and that I must soon join him in the next world. The more genuine reason why I mourn his death is the realisation that all his acts and arrangements up to his death were in accordance with my sins rather than with my prayers, so that he preferred to pass over to his Lord as a debtor rather than as a free man²⁰.

On the one hand, there is a gleam of hope in these words that death is only temporary, but on the other hand, Paulinus’ words are full of regret and reveal some internal pain and guilt. Paulinus constantly returned to his “sinful” life before his conversion and here we also find his reminiscences: Paulinus’ regret, because his brother died not as a free man, that is, fully converted, but as a debtor to God, living like Paulinus before his conversion. Therefore, Paulinus asks Amandus: “share my suffering endured on his behalf, combine with me in the toil of prayer, that the pitying and merciful God [...] may through your prayers refresh his soul with the drops of His mercy”²¹.

Similarly to the letter to Delphinus, in his letter to Amandus, Paulinus also wants to maintain stoic restraint, but only in the sense of the words, meaning the subject he is faithful to, because he remains on the issue of death in the letter, also talking about his own death, above all that for sin. At the same time, however, he does not exercise restraint in what can bring his brother salvation, so he asks for prayer and mercy.

Thus, we see the whole spectrum of feelings related to the death of loved ones in these three writings. They touch the deepest inner part of a person, where in the face of pain and grief there is only silence, or at least

¹⁸ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 35, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 2, p. 172.

¹⁹ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 36, 2, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 2, p. 174.

²⁰ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 36, 2, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 2, p. 174-175.

²¹ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 36, 2, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 2, p. 175.

the limitation of words, because both letters concerning his brother's death are among the shortest in Paulinus' epistolography. The situation is different in the consolation letters that Paulinus sent to his friends in connection with the death of their relatives. Among Paulinus' works, two such letters have survived, one in the form of prose and the other in the form of poetry. Both contain a wealth of feelings related to the loss of loved ones, feelings that must confront the feelings of those who have lost their loved ones. Interestingly, no reminiscences have survived in Paulinus' works after the death of his beloved wife Therasia, who probably died a few years before her husband²².

2. Your passions

A few months after the death of Pammachius' wife Paulina²³, Paulinus wrote him a long letter in which he assured him about "personal feelings of love" and sharing in his grief²⁴. He also recalled the words of St. Paul: "to rejoice with them that rejoice, to weep with them that weep" (Rom 12:15), all in order "to show sympathy towards each other and «bear each other's burdens» (Ga 6:2), so that by mutual consolation we might strengthen our common faith and warm our wearied hearts"²⁵. Paulinus of Nola, speaking of consolation, which is to flow from the love of Christ, points out that it strengthens the common faith and comforts tormented hearts. This is because "brotherly sympathy fortifies the struggling soul, and like a wall resists the various buffets on the oppressed mind"²⁶. Nolanus emphasizes above all the spiritual and community dimensions as well as the practical dimension of comforting and participating in the

²² A. Ruggiero, *I rapporti tra Paolino di Nola e Terasia negli Scritti di Paolino e nella testimonianza di Ambrogio, Agostino, Girolamo e Gregorio di Tours*, „Impegno e Dialogo” 15 (2006) p. 147-165.

²³ See J. Pałucki, *Epistolografia Paulina z Noli (355-430). Adresaci oraz okoliczności powstawania listów*, in: *Fructus Spiritus est Caritas. Księga jubileuszowa ofiarowana ks. prof. F. Drączkowskiemu*, ed. M. Wysocki, Lublin 2011, p. 305-314; J. Pałucki, *Świeccy adresaci listów Paulina z Noli*, *VoxP* 42-43 (2002) p. 253-260.

²⁴ This letter is not only an expression of compassion and mourning, but also a praise of conjugal love, Cf. A. Ruggiero, *Paolino di Nola, cantore della famiglia*, Nola 1999; J. Pałucki, *Małżeństwo drogą doskonalenia chrześcijańskiego na podstawie epistolografii św. Paulina z Noli*, *VoxP* 57 (2012) p. 469-481.

²⁵ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 1, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 117.

²⁶ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 1, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 118.

feelings of other people: they are to protect the consoled person from making careless decisions under the influence of emotions. What connects Paulinus’ and Pammachius’ feelings is Christian love. In this letter, Paulinus shows a beautiful example of participating in the feelings of a man who mourns the death of his wife:

Therefore, I embrace you in this love, and reverence you as Christ’s member. I love you as my fellow member. For those who have one faith must have one mind also, and those who have one God have a single spirit. So, since our bodies are one in the harness of belief, how can our hearts be divided as we bear with each other? I speak the truth and no lie when I say that in reflecting on your emotions I feel my own heart torn by your sighs, and the limbs which truly belong to both of us pierced by the pain of your wound²⁷.

Paulinus talks about his emotions related to Paulina’s death that he shares with Pammachius and presents himself as completely united with his pain, which flows from a faith they both share. It also keeps them united in thoughts and feelings. Paulinus then shows the various symptoms of mourning and the feelings that accompanied Pammachius and, in a way, Paulinus as well. He mentions the funeral when Pammachius escorted the deceased to the grave:

[...] unlike most men you accompanied her to burial with her tribute of tears, and unlike those deprived of Christian hope, without empty pomp and honour. Instead, you first fittingly performed the proper rites for her dear body, sprinkling and bedewing it with affectionate and copious tears of love, and then in more religious fashion you honoured her burial by attending her with remedies which bring salvation and works which live-in other words, with almsgiving²⁸.

Thus, Paulinus shows a special way of experiencing mourning. It emphasizes pain and regret, but at the same time points to Christian faith and hope, which should influence the way of experiencing grief. Therefore, in the rest of the letter, he straightforwardly expresses: “Granted our love may weep for a time, but our faith must ever rejoice. We should long for those who have been sent before us, but we should not lose hope of gaining

²⁷ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 3, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 119.

²⁸ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 3, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 120.

them back”²⁹. Paulinus distinguishes between different states and behaviors related to experiencing the death of a loved one. He speaks of tears and longing, lamentations and mourning, pointing out that the former are more worthy of a believer and more suitable for consolation³⁰. In the same letter, Nolanus, referring to all the virtues possessed by the deceased Paulina, including meditation and praise on them, pointing to the healing effect of such a procedure, which at first, however, seems difficult, states: “Thus, those very causes which inflame your heart’s wound can bring you a greater consolation”³¹. Considering her merits, virtues and goodness, although they sadden the widower, they should give him as a believer abundant comfort³². For Paulinus, the essential issue in experiencing mourning is not the loss of a loved one, but rather the fact that she existed, that she was with us, that she endowed us with her goodness³³, and for that she should be mourning properly in gratitude and joy.

Such a mourning experience results from the fact that Paulinus of Nola sees death as a sleep and emphasizes its temporality³⁴. Since death is a sleep, then in loving those dear to us, Paulinus writes, “let us show the longing of intimate friendship, but let us console ourselves by that confidence in the resurrection which is afforded by our faith”³⁵. He clearly emphasizes the difference between pagans and Christians. The former are guided by human opinions, the unbelievable dreams of poets or the imaginations of philosophers, and therefore they have no hope and “delude themselves with the lies of poets”³⁶. The lack of hope and despair is precisely the lack of faith in the resurrection, which Christians draw “from the very fount of truth”³⁷. That is why he writes:

But we have no need of such desperate remedies, for we have Truth Itself. This Truth, which is God and the word of God, has promised by Its teaching, and proved by Its rising again, the resurrection of the flesh unto eternal life

²⁹ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 9, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 125.

³⁰ See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 5.

³¹ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 6, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 123.

³² See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 5.

³³ See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 6.

³⁴ See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 9.

³⁵ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 9, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 125.

³⁶ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 25, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 140.

³⁷ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 25, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 140.

[...]. He showed to His disciples His own person, in whom all men are taken up, raised from the dead, and He instilled in them belief in His risen³⁸.

When experiencing grief over the loss of a loved one, it is important not only to refer and show specific care for that person, the one we mourn and prepare a funeral service, but also to care for ourselves, our feelings and our lives. That is Paulinus teaches Pammachius:

I think that this king and prophet [David] has given us sufficient instruction on the anxiety which we are to assume after our loved ones have gone. We are to concern ourselves with the journey by which we ourselves follow, rather than with the journey of them who have already gone before us and arrived. It is a loving act to show sadness when our dear ones are torn from us, but it is a holy act to be joyful through hope and trust in the promises of God [...]. Thankful joy is more acceptable to God than long and querulous grief³⁹.

Paulinus clearly emphasizes that sadness and crying cannot last long. It is God himself who, on the one hand, orders us to shed tears over the deceased, but at the same time “restricts our bitter weeping to a single day. He allows us to weep the tears which dissolve our grief and relieve our souls, but He cuts short the sorrow which oppresses our minds with uncontrolled and unreasonable torture, and which our frailty cannot longer endure”⁴⁰. Paulinus turns out to be an excellent expert on human feelings and a therapist. He emphasizes human weakness, because bodily sadness is caused by human weakness⁴¹, but at the same time, he shows the greatness of God’s help in bearing loss and the greatness of Pammachius’ faith and wisdom:

this grief of yours and this fear of mine are balanced by my awareness of your strength and wisdom, the light from which is too abundant in you to be buried in the darkness of grief. Rather, your strength conceals your sadness and swallows up death itself and the onset of baneful grief⁴².

After showing feelings, sufferings, tears and longing, Paulinus goes on to describe the deeds and works that Pammachius did throughout his life

³⁸ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 25, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 140-141.

³⁹ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 8, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 124-125.

⁴⁰ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 10, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 126.

⁴¹ See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 10.

⁴² Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 11, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 127.

as a good husband and faithful Christian. In the following fragments of his letter, Paulinus also emanates feelings, but quite different than in the first part of the letter. Now he is praising his friend's works and, as he points out, he is moving from the holiness of tears to pious works⁴³. Good is to come out of Paulina's death, not sorrow, but the joy of doing good, because it is through Pammachius' actions that he wins salvation for his wife. Feelings of regret and sadness should turn into joy, because:

She now obtains honour through your deserving deeds. Now she feasts on your bread and is enriched by your wealth. [...] She needs no refreshment from the tip of another's finger, for she is sprinkled with the water from her own fingers, that is, from the works of your right hand⁴⁴.

Another letter of consoles is the above-mentioned poem 31, addressed to Pneumatius and Fidelis, the parents of an eight-year-old boy Celsus⁴⁵, after his death⁴⁶. It is in this work that the question that is the essence of the title of this article is directly asked. In the face of death of a boy, who was "transported to God, for he was doubly a child, both in span of age and through the water of the font", Paulinus asks a question and answers it immediately: "Shall I show joy or sorrow? The boy is worthy of both. My love for him urges tears, yet also joy, for faith bids me be glad and affection bids me weep"⁴⁷. So, on the one hand, that what is heavenly – faith (*fides*), that guarantees joy, and on

⁴³ See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 11.

⁴⁴ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 13, 28, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 1, p. 142.

⁴⁵ About fatherhood in the works of Paulinus see M. Wysocki, *To be a father is it only "looking after possessions and sons"* (cfr. *Epist.* 39,2)? *Paulinus of Nola's view on the figure and the role of the father*, w: *La figura e il ruolo del padre nell'antichità classica e cristiana*, ed. C. Cheung – P. Mbote Mbote, *Flumina ex Fontibus* 22, Roma 2021, p. 293-304.

⁴⁶ Ch. Favez, *À propos des 'consolations'. Note sur la composition du carmen 31 de Paulin de Nole*, „*Revue de Études Latines*” 13 (1935) p. 266-268; A. Mencucci, *Consolatio: Carmen XXI. Traduzione, commento e note*, Senigallia 1972; G. Guttilla, *Una nuova lettura del Carme 31 di S. Paolino di Nola*, „*Koinonia*” 11 (1987) p. 69-97; A. Quacquarelli, *Una consolatio cristiana (Paul. Nol. Carm. 31)*, in: *Atti del Convegno. XXXI Cinquantenario della morte di S. Paolino di Nola (431-1981)*, Roma 1983, p. 121-141. Generally about consolation in Paulinus' poems see G. Guttilla, *Osservazioni su alcuni motivi consolatori presenti nei Carmi di Paolino di Nola*, „*Messana*” 16 (1995) p. 29-39.

⁴⁷ Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 8-10, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 309.

the other what is earthly – affection (*pietas*) that guarantees sorrow. In such categories Paulinus presents the feelings associated with the death of Celsus. He says:

I mourn that so little reward from so sweet a treasure was granted to his parents for so short time. On the other hand, when I think of the eternal blessings of everlasting life which God prepares for the innocent in heaven, I rejoice that he has completed his span in so short a time⁴⁸.

Paulinus uses an interesting procedure in his *consolatio*: he does not initially refer directly to the boy’s parents, but first, he shows the virtues and advantages of little Celsus and the reward he already enjoys in heaven. Only later does he turn to his parents: “Dutiful parents, I would not have you sin through copious weeping. Let not your love turn to blame. For it is a wicked love which laments a soul in blessedness, and a baneful affection which bewails one who takes joy in God”⁴⁹. Therefore, the real love, that should characterize Christians, does not allow to lament over the dead one. In the following verses, Paulinus shows what true grief should consist of, obviously from the Christian point of view. It is supposed to be sorrow for sins, one has “to grieve this darkness of mankind”. Then, in a long poetic story, he shows the greatness of the salvation brought about by Christ, with an emphasis above all on the resurrection in which believers also participate, ending with an appeal to Celsus’ parents: “So, dear brethren so close to my heart, bring gladness to your grieving hearts with this faith”⁵⁰. He means faith in the resurrection. One thing remains from such faith: “Dispel your sadness [...]. Trust in God and wear the garb of gladness”⁵¹.

People who do not share this faith do not recognize the resurrection, that is, they do not have hope, living only according to this world, showing unhappy grief and crazed sorrow, but not so with Christians who hope in God. Of all those who are dear to Paulinus’ heart, only Celsus already fully experiences the fullness of life and that is why at the end of his poem Paulinus addresses his prayers for help and intercession. Celsus is already happy and joyful, “sporting [...] in eternal glades”⁵². We, here on earth, still

⁴⁸ Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 11-15, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 309.

⁴⁹ Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 43-46, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 310.

⁵⁰ Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 381-382, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 321.

⁵¹ Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 383-384, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 321.

⁵² Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 606, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 328.

have sadness and hope “that we can follow you [Celsus] with like ingenuousness”⁵³. This is a reason for comfort and joy for everyone.

Thus, in the works that exemplify the ancient *consolatio*, Paulinus presents a new, Christian approach to the death of relatives, which is expressed in the title of this paper as a question: “Shall I show joy or sorrow?”. Paulinus, as it is evidenced by his surviving works, recognizes that the weakness of his body, mind and feelings are caused by sin. He constantly experiences “fleshly weakness”⁵⁴ on his spiritual path, which also touches his interior, his feelings⁵⁵. It is the cause of sadness in the face of the loss of loved ones, but there is a physician- Jesus Christ⁵⁶, who causes us to feel joy from the hope of their salvation. In letter 39, Paulinus refers to four fundamental stoic *passiones*, *spes – metus – gaudium – dolor*, “which give rise to as many vices, and which most greatly disturb the human race”⁵⁷. In the context of life-death and joy-sorrow dichotomy outlined above, especially important and showing the Christian re-evaluation of these stoic *passiones*, are Paulinus’ further words: “Two of them, mental grief and joy, are concerned with the present, the others, fear and hope, with the future”⁵⁸. This is also Paulinus’ answer to the title’s question. Both realities concern the future of the deceased relatives and therefore both should be present in the life of a Christian, as Paulinus of Nola presents to us: joy from the hope of salvation, sorrow from the fear of damnation.

“Shall I show joy or sorrow?” (Poem 31). Pain of Loss – a Study of Paulinus of Nola’s Works

(summary)

Unfortunately, Paulinus of Nola is not a very appreciated Father of the Church today, because he did not contribute much to the development of the dogmas of the early Church, and yet his contemporaries respected him and indicated him as an example and referred to his conversion and spiritual path. He was regarded as a spiritual master. Therefore, when discussing the issue of *passiones*, and above all the pain after the loss of loved ones, it is worth and should refer to the preserved works of Paulinus: his letters and poems. He himself experienced the tragic death of his brother, the premature death of his only son,

⁵³ Paulinus Nolanus, *Carm.* 31, 629-630, Walsh, *Poems*, p. 329.

⁵⁴ See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 26, 3; 40, 10.

⁵⁵ See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 32, 25.

⁵⁶ See Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 23, 5.7.

⁵⁷ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 39, 6, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 2, p. 200.

⁵⁸ Paulinus Nolanus, *Ep.* 39, 6, Walsh, *Letters*, v. 2, p. 200.

and finally the death of his wife Therasia. All this allows us to find in his works an answer to the question of how to deal with emotions after the departure of a loved one and about a Christian interpretation of experiencing death and mourning. Thanks to the analyzes of the surviving Paulinus' texts and their results, presented in this article, we can see that Paulinus, although educated on the classical models, shows the Christian understanding of mourning contained in the title question: on the one hand, he emphasizes its human side and the sadness over the passing of a loved one, on the other hand, he emphasizes the supernatural joy of salvation and being with God. In his works, Paulinus also shows other aspects of experiencing death, which together create a rich phenomenon expressed by four Stoic *passiones*: *spes* – *metus* – *gaudium* – *dolor*.

Keywords: Paulinus of Nola; Death; Consolatio; Passions; Letter; Poem

„Mam okazywać radość czy smutek?” (Pieśń 31). Ból utraty – studium twórczości Paulina z Noli

(streszczenie)

Paulin z Noli nie jest, niestety, współcześnie docenianym Ojcem Kościoła, gdyż nie wniósł nic wielkiego w rozwój dogmatów wczesnego Kościoła. Jednak współcześni mu ludzie poważali go, wskazywali jako wzór i odwoływali się do jego nawrócenia i duchowej drogi. Był on traktowany jako mistrz duchowy. Dlatego też omawiając zagadnienie namiętności, a przede wszystkim bólu po stracie najbliższych, warto i powinniśmy sięgnąć do zachowanej twórczości Paulina: listów oraz pieśni. On sam przeżył przecież tragiczną śmierć brata, przedwczesne odejście jedyne go syna czy wreszcie śmierć swej żony Terazji. To wszystko pozwala doszukiwać się w jego dziełach odpowiedzi na pytanie o sposób radzenia sobie z emocjami po odejściu ukochanej osoby oraz o chrześcijańską interpretację przeżywania śmierci i żałoby. Dzięki przeprowadzonym analizom zachowanych tekstów Paulina i ich wynikom ukazany w niniejszym artykule możemy dostrzec, że Paulin, choć wykształcony na klasycznych wzorcach, ukazuje chrześcijański wymiar żałoby zawarty w tytułowym pytaniu: z jednej strony podkreśla ludzki jej wymiar i smutek z powodu odejścia bliskiej osoby, a z drugiej akcentuje nadprzyrodzoną radość ze zbawienia i przebywania u Boga. Paulin w swych dziełach ukazuje także inne wymiary przeżywania śmierci, które tworzą razem bogaty fenomen oddawany przez cztery stoickie *passiones*: *spes* – *metus* – *gaudium* – *dolor*.

Słowa kluczowe: Paulin z Noli; śmierć; konsolacja; namiętności; list; pieśń

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