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Will St. Faustina and St. John Paul II become Doctors of the Church?

Polish Saints and Apostles of Divine Mercy

Cracow 2017

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Preface

The last half century since the end of the Second Vatican Council shows how grateful we should be to the Holy Spirit who constantly reveals new ways forward for the Church. We are all indebted to this great conciliar inheritance, which was an epic event not only for Christians but for the whole world. The co-creator of the spirit and letter of the Vatican Council proved to be St. John Paul II, the great pope from Poland.

As archbishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyła played a formative role in the sessions of the second Vatican Council. He actively participated in the writing and editing of Council documents. On his return to Cracow, he enthusiastically attempted to incorporate the Council's program of renewal into the life of the local church. He created the seven year Synod in the Cracow Church (1972–1979), was patron of their meetings and introduced the Council's guidelines wisely and consistently, in parishes, deaneries and all renewal groups in the church.

In the book he wrote on his return from Rome he confessed: 'Any bishop who took part in the Second Vatican Council, feels the need to repay a debt. Apart from the many meanings already given to the Council and those which are yet to be given it the future, it has one unique meaning for those who helped to create it (...)

On the basis of this experience, which historically is over but still continues in spirit, the need to repay a debt is created'.¹

After Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected bishop of Rome (1979) and chose the name John Paul II, he began introducing the Council's reforms into the universal Church with great determination and dedication. From a historical perspective it is now quite clear, that one of the most urgent matters was the need to enrich the faith of Christ's followers by preaching about Divine Mercy.

Sister Faustina Kowalska, whom Jesus asked for the first Sunday after Easter to be celebrated as Divine Mercy Sunday, the image of the Merciful Jesus to be painted, the chaplet to be recited, and the hour of mercy to be celebrated in remembrance of Christ's death became the Apostle of this truth. John Paul II fulfilled this request, having first canonized Sister Faustina. In his homilies he often referred to Divine Mercy, devoting an entire encyclical to it in 1980 – *Dives in misericordia*.

This was John Paul II's second encyclical: 'Following the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and paying close attention to the special needs of our times, I devoted the encyclical *Redemptor hominis* to the truth about man, a truth that is revealed to us in its fullness and depth in Christ. A no less important need in these critical and difficult times impels me to draw attention once again in Christ to the countenance of the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort". We read in the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*: "Christ the new Adam... fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his lofty calling", and does it "in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love". The words that I have quoted are clear testimony to the fact that man cannot be manifested in the full dignity of his nature without reference – not only on the level of concepts but also in an integrally existential way – to God. Man and

¹ K. Wojtyła, *U podstaw odnowy. Studium o realizacji Vaticanum II*, Cracow 1972, p. 5.

Preface

man's lofty calling are revealed in Christ through the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love". (DM1). Ultimately, it is no coincidence that this pope was canonized on Divine Mercy Sunday in 2014.

It gives me great joy to know that this book: *Who will become a Doctor of the Church: St. Faustina or John Paul II? Polish saints apostles of Divine Mercy*, written by Fr. Andrzej Napiórkowski, a Pauline and Fr. Pawel Warchol, a Franciscan, is now on the market drawing God's love closer to man while at the same time realizing the moral genius of Faustina Kowalska and John Paul II. It was a good thing for Polish theologians to take up the subject of Divine Mercy postulating that these two great Polish saints of the twentieth century would take their place among the Doctors of the universal Church. Just as St. John Paul II felt he had a debt to repay for the great work of the Vatican Council, let us all be indebted to him for his wise teachings and holy life.

Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz

Metropolitan cardinal of Cracow

Cracow, 15 August 2014

Introduction

The truth of God's mercy is neither new, nor a discovery of the 20th century. Almost three thousand years ago, pious Israelites already called upon Yahweh: "I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me, hear my words. Wondrously show your steadfast love, O savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand. Guard me as the apple of the eye, hide me in the shadow of your wings". (Ps 17, 6-8).¹

Mercy is deeply entrenched in Judeo-Christian revelation and it is considered one of God's basic attributes. The model is Jesus Christ, the God-Man who is both the source of mercy and its perfect manifestation in His daily life. We find many parables in the Gospel which encourage their listeners to actively love, to help selflessly and to show kindness towards those in need. Examples include the merciful Samaritan or the Merciful Father who forgives the Prodigal Son. Already from the very beginnings of the Church, Jesus' followers tried to carry out acts of mercy, not only within the community of the faithful but also towards a foreign and often hostile world. The Scriptures and Church

¹ All quotes from the Bible use the New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (translator's note).

Tradition consistently reveal the mystery of God's mercy and call us to engage in it.

In the last half century, God's mercy was once again made known to the consciousness of Christians and the whole world thanks to two of His trustworthy apostles: Faustina Kowalska and John Paul II. At Jesus' behest, the mystic nun from Cracow wrote down His message about this Divine attribute, to make it known to a sinful world. The pope from Poland authenticated it by the authority of his office. Although Faustina was neither a theologian, nor were her works presented in a scholarly manner, they illuminated anew the eternal truth that God is merciful love and that thanks to that love man is cleansed of sin, receives forgiveness and can begin again the next stages of his life. John Paul II understood this truth, formulated it theologically and offered it to the whole of humanity. Today, this logic of action – being obedient to the Triune God – can be understood as the collaborative work of two saints on their journey to heaven and their desire to help others.

Sister Faustina died before the outbreak of the Second World War and she was spared the cruelty of German Fascism and the barbarity of Soviet Communism. St. John Paul II however, lived through both these forms of totalitarianism. In his teaching, this is what the saint from Cracow had to say about these systems of government: 'totalitarianism arises out of a denial of truth in the objective sense. If there is no transcendent truth, in obedience to which man achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relations between people. Their self-interest as a class, group or nation would inevitably set them in opposition to one another. If one does not acknowledge transcendent truth, then the force of power takes over, and each person tends to make full use of the means at his disposal in order to impose his own interests or his own opinion, with no regard for the rights of others. People are then respected only to the extent that they can be exploited for selfish ends. Thus, the root of modern totalitarianism is to be

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found in the denial of the transcendent dignity of the human person who, as the visible image of the invisible God, is therefore by his very nature the subject of rights which no one may violate — no individual, group, class, nation or State’².

After the collapse of Fascism and Communism, John Paul II noticed the rise of new forms of godless and inhuman ideologies. Today they are taking root ever more deeply in our world. For this reason he indicated two fundamental principles for humanity: ‘the priority of ethics over technology, in the primacy of the person over things, and in the superiority of spirit over matter’.³ At the beginning of the 21st century therefore, let us not waver in speaking of God’s love with a new fervor, and immersing ourselves in his cleansing love. This may today be the only hope of rescue for believers and for a godless world.

Revealing and preaching the truth about Divine Mercy, both Saint Faustina Kowalska and Saint John Paul II desired to renew the Divine Image found in man and to rekindle in him the light of hope. The Pope’s call ‘Do not be afraid’ finds its source in Christ’s message of mercy, as it teaches that the one who trusts gains strength and power. Mercy ‘dispels the thickest clouds and lets a ray of light penetrate every life’.⁴ It opens up a horizon of goodness to every believer and non-believer. The examples of St. Faustina and St. John Paul II show us that the wisdom that they preached cannot be forgotten. It does not grow old and it has been authenticated by the sanctity of their lives. Today, they shine like beacons for the third millennium. They are teachers and witnesses of the eternal truth of mercy without which man cannot live. From this flows the desire to uphold and strengthen their message. All of us are called

² John Paul II, Encyclical *Centesimus annus*, Vatican 1991, nr. 47.

³ John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, Vatican 1979, nr. 16.

⁴ John Paul II, *Homily for the Canonization of Sr. Mary Faustina Kowalska*, Vatican 2000, nr. 7.

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to be apostles of mercy and to follow in the footsteps of these great teachers of the universal Church.

This is the tradition into which this book is written and we place it in the hands of a sympathetic reader. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you'. (1P 1, 3-4).

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St. Faustina and St. John Paul II lead us into the mystery of the Church

1. How to understand ‘The Church’?

There are many definitions of ‘The Church’, and this is right since it is too rich and complex a reality to be fully captured in only one phrase. On the basis of the Bible and age long intellectual and spiritual reflection, ecclesiology offers us the following meaningful and binding conceptions: “God’s people”, “the mystical Body of Christ”, “the house of God”, “temple of the Holy Spirit”, “(Eucharistic) community” and “the fundamental sacrament”. Although every age most commonly considered one of these terms as primary (and it became the most important in a given period of ecclesiology), we cannot dismiss the rest of the conceptions. Contemporary ecclesiology treats the aforementioned definitions as congruent, which means they are not meant to only ‘tolerate’ one another, rather they are to be understood as complementary. Such an approach allows us to understand the Church as the mysterious meeting of sinful man with God who justifies him through Jesus Christ.

In the Constitution of the Church *Lumen gentium*, the Second Vatican Council understood ‘The Church’ as the mystery of God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, in other words as a sacramental sign of union with God (the fundamental sacrament)

Access to this mystery was gained by Jesus Christ on the cross and by His resurrection; its actual achievement however, was made possible by the Holy Spirit. It becomes possible for us thanks to the sacrament of Baptism, through which we are joined to the Holy Trinity. The Church must therefore be regarded as a community between God and man, which is formed by the Triune God and all the baptized faithful. One cannot reduce the Church to only the clergy and the faithful laity. We are led into this tension and multifaceted nature of the Church in a trustworthy way by the saints. Sister Faustina Kowalska, announced a saint for the whole Church in the year 2000, is an example of this, as is Pope John Paul II who was canonized in 2014. Through their extraordinary closeness with the Risen Lord, these saints transformed the face of His Church. This transformation takes place on several levels; not only on a spiritual level but also on an institutional and doctrinal one.

2. Between institutionalism and pneumatism

In the first centuries of its existence, the Church was understood as a community of the baptized, which participates in the life of God and wishes to express it adequately through the *diaconia*, liturgy and witness. One can say that up until the 5th century AD the Church was a charismatic community which bore the marks of organization and order. The Church is also understood as a community of saints (*communio sanctorum*). In patristic writings, which the Magisterium held to faithfully, it has two meanings: firstly, they are all believers who imitate Christ as a community of persons; secondly, they are salvific goods.

In the 5th century AD, by accepting and following the structures of the fallen Roman Empire, the Church lost its charismatic character and gradually began to lose its mystery. From the 4th to the 6th century, patristics did not work out the connection between theological understanding and the specific situation of the Church.

In the Middle Ages the spiritual-mystical image of the Church was increasingly side-tracked, while its legal dimension became more important. After the Christianization of the Germanic tribes, the Church was already a uniform creation. A process of uniting took place because new countries were beginning to absorb the Church into their reality. The dispute over the investiture of Pope Gregory VII (1020–1085) proved necessary.

The Church tried to liberate itself from the hegemony of the earthly rulers. It was successful in that it was able to expand the temporal aspects of the Church, at the expense of the spiritual ones. The Church, like the State, existed in the feudal structures of the time. Society was characterized by strictly defined relationships. There were sovereigns, vassals, peasants, burghers, clergy and monks. The Church's struggle for autonomy led to the establishment of a clerical system of law. Ecclesiology became more and more outdated in canon law and was replaced by legal categories.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, there was a strengthening of institutionalism in the Church. Already since the beginning of the 15th century, many reform movements took place, these involved Jan Wiclef, Jan Hus, Martin Luther, Philip Melanchon, Ulrich Zwingli, Jan Kalwin, Tomasz Münzer and others. They saw the Church as a spiritual reality (the Church "invisible"). However, these reform movements that wanted to emphasize the spiritual dimension of the Church, often triggered the opposite reaction. The definition of Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) compared the Church to the Kingdom of France and the Republic of Venice. He saw the Church as an ordered society. The dimension of mystery was depreciated and side-tracked, while the temporal dimension came to the fore. For four hundred years after the Council of Trent (1545–1563), the image of the triumphal Church took first place (*societas perfecta*). Authoritarianism was the key concept in all ecclesiology. The Church made itself out to be the perfect institution of salvation, equipped with all the necessary means of salvation. These means

were provided by the clergy, and merely accepted by the laity. They were the object, not the subject of pastoral endeavor. They were merely the flock that was kept by the shepherds. Over the next four centuries, the identification of the Church with hierarchy was maintained. The division between the clergy and the laity was deep. Such an image of the Church as a perfectly organized institution also had its positive aspects. For many people it was a source of security and provided them with a homeland. The Church was understood as a house of glory, as a Mother and as a rock during times of turmoil. It was a source of help and necessary guidance. However, one cannot overlook the negative aspects of such a vision of the Church, such as the fact that it became incapable of dialogue. As the institution became fossilized, it rejected all other views. As a result, there was a dramatic lack of communication with the culture.

By the nineteenth century, the Church announced the primacy of the pope. The Second Vatican Council adopted two constitutions, *Dei filius* and *Pastor aeternus*, in which it elaborated on the teaching connected with this matter. In the latter document, the dogma of the infallibility of the Bishop of Rome and the primacy of his jurisdiction were pronounced. These further reinforced the institutional image of the Church. The First Vatican Council – unfortunately cut short due to the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) – therefore took the first steps to move away from an institutional ecclesiology.

The recovery of church pneumaticity can be attributed in large part to the achievements of the theological schools in Tübingen and in Rome (The Gregorian University). The first one is associated with such names as Johann Sebastian Drey and Johann Adam Möhler. These Catholic theologians were also in touch with the Protestant representatives of the Tübingen school as set out by Ferdinand Christian Baur, David Friedrich Strauss and Eduard von Zeller, who were connected to German idealism and historical criticism. The main thinkers of the Roman School were Carlo Passaglia, Giovanni Perrone, Clemens Schrader and Johann Baptist Franzelin.

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Referring to the patristic and pneumatological achievements, Catholic professors Drey and Möhler began to write again about the mystical aspect of the Ecclesia.¹

In the 20th century, there was a clear critique of the Church's 'legalistic episode'. Romano Guardini wrote: "The Church is born in souls". In France, reform efforts intensified, contributing to the renewal of theology. To the fathers of the new ecclesiology of the French we can include such theologians as Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu. The excellent Encyclical by Pius XII *Divino afflante Spiritu* and *Mystici Corporis Christi* introduced the biblical concept of the Mystical Body of Christ into ecclesiology. The concept of mystery (*mysterion*) in the conciliar texts is often associated with the term "*communio*". Also in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church there are quite a few places where the term *communio* occurs.²

It is clear from the careful reading of these passages that ecclesiology is rooted in the teaching on the Holy Trinity. The Church is shown as an icon of the Triune God. Ecclesiology is closely related to trinitology, especially when it accentuates its communal dimension. The mystery of the Holy Trinity contains the mystery of the Church. If we want to regain the mystery of the Ecclesia and renew our reflections on the priesthood of all the baptized, we must refer to the Trinitarian community. The contemporary lack of understanding of the universal priesthood of the faithful has its root in the lack of trinitology in the teaching of the Church. On the one hand, we continue to experience a great passivity on the part of the laity, and on the other, priests are reluctant to create parish councils or other communities to manage parish affairs.

¹ More on this matter in: A. Napiórkowski, *Bosko-ludzka wspólnota. Podstawy katolickiej eklezjologii integralnej*, Kraków 2010, p. 153–204.

² C.f. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, nr 4, 7, 8, 14, 15, 18, 21, 24, 41, 50; further: CC.

It is worth remembering what is written about this matter in the pastoral guidelines to the book of *The Rite of Baptism*: “Through baptism the faithful are offered up to the Trinity and they enter into a community with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and this is a community of love, a community with God through Christ and in the Holy Spirit”.³ Participation in this community carries the duty of pursuing holiness. The vocation to holiness, as stated in the Final Relation is an invitation to an ever deeper participation in the life of God in the One Trinity, which means fulfilling all human desires, but at the same time is an invitation to the inner transformation of the heart, that is, to holiness. The sacrament of baptism implies a universal call to holiness; therefore saints can be seen as something normal in the life of the Church.⁴

Without this awareness that whoever is baptized is consecrated as the property of the Holy Trinity and, touched by the Holy Spirit who leaves an indelible sacramental sign, enters into the fellowship of the three persons of God, there will be no pursuit of holiness and interior conversion or renewal and understanding of the Church. There will not be an increase the awareness among the laity, and the Church will not be rooted in its believers.

The mystery of the Church lies in the transformed humanity of Jesus Christ. What is the heart of the Church? The Risen Christ! Hence, as Jesus Christ is both God and Man so the Church, His mystical Body, is made up of both divine and human nature. The Church is the extension of the Incarnation of the Divine Person of the Word. As the “mystery of mysteries” it is composed of what is divine and what is human, and thus assimilates itself to the mystery of the Incarnate Word. And thus, the Church is not

³ Rites of Child Baptism 1. 5, Katowice 1972, p. 11.

⁴ C.f. K. Koch, *Tempo di interiorità. Per una Chiesa che vive il mistero*, Brescia, p. 145–152.

only a spiritual community but also an institution, and as such it is equally a mystery.⁵

Christ could not be present in the community of the Church if it lacked in human order created by the Holy Spirit. The famous Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, speaking of the fact that Christ cannot be without the Church, stresses that the Church is and must be both a community and an institution. Such an approach to the Church introduces us to a very important issue, namely in the topic of salvation. Is salvation achievable outside the institutional dimension of the Church? We ignore the wider consideration of the patriarchal *extra-Ecclesiam nulla salus* formula ("outside the Church there is no salvation"), since it originally concerned Christians who had entered into conflict with the institution of the Church through heresy or schism, and therefore consciously placed themselves outside the Church. Throughout history, this formula has taken on various shades of interpretation⁶.

Let us look at this question from another angle and ask ourselves: Is salvation possible outside the institution of the Church? The answer is 'yes'. Salvation is also possible outside church structures. But there are certain conditions that must be met for this to be the case. Pope Pius IX, in order to emphasize the necessity of the Church for salvation, recognized that people could also be saved by God who, through no fault of their own did not know Christianity. The Second Vatican Council has gone further in this respect by teaching that people who do good and who love, and through which they are directed to the Church of Christ, can receive salvation. Even atheists and unbelievers, when they "try to live an honest life", can attain the grace of intimacy with God. This

⁵ C.f. CC 8. C.f. S. Dianich, D. Harrington, *La Chiesa. Una "realtà complessa" tra istituzione e mistero*, San Paolo Edizioni, Cinisello Balsamo 2010.

⁶ C.f. A. Śliwiński, *Extra Ecclesiam salus nulla*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, Lublin 1985, v. IV, c. 1474.

possibility of salvation is assigned to them only because 1) there is a Catholic Church and 2) the fullness of means of salvation are to be found within it. At the same time, the Council warns that those who know that the Church is necessary for salvation can not be saved if they do not want to join in it or persevere in it (Catholic Christians).⁷

Furthermore, it is necessary distinguish between belonging to the institution of the Church and salvation. Salvation is more certain and effective within the Church because it holds the full measure of salvation (the treasure of "salvific goods"). But everyone is called to salvation, also those outside of the Ecclesia (those who do not formerly belong to the Church as an institution), but salvation is possible only in Christ and through Christ as the One Mediator of salvation (though man does not need to know this). There is therefore a real possibility of salvation for people who do not belong to the ecclesiastical institution, but this salvation must still come about through the grace of Christ. This is always done in communion with His invisible Church, which has the full measure of salvation. This is the fundamental, authentic and objective role of the Church.

"There cannot be true holiness in the Church", argues Balthasar, "unless there is full devotion to Christ in His deity and humanity, as well as to the sacraments and the hierarchy."⁸ The Swiss theologian speaks of the so-called "objective Church", i.e. one without which sanctity is impossible. True holiness is only in the Church, in which there is full devotion to Christ, and also to the hierarchy of the Church. For him, the "objective church" is the institutional one, while the "subjective church" is the one which is born of a fellowship of love. This is possible because the Church possesses the Holy Spirit, who is both objective and subjective. The Holy Spirit is subjective

⁷ C.f. CC nr. 14.

⁸ H. Urs von Balthasar, An interview with Italian journalist, Renato Farmie "Die Tagespost", 27.11.1986.

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in the sense of being the love between the Father and of the Son, but he is also objective in the sense of being someone or the Third Person of the Trinity. The objectivity of the Holy Spirit demands that the Church has a certain visible structure

How far the hierarchical institution is associated with the Holy Spirit, can be seen in the Acts of the Apostles, which speak of the hierarchy established by the Holy Spirit. (Acts, 20:28), It is that hierarchy which, united with Peter, could pronounce, write, and uphold the words *Visum est Spiritui Sancto et nobis* ("We have decided the Holy Spirit and we" (Acts, 5:28). This hierarchy has a special involvement in the didactic, priestly and pastoral role of Christ. This is also a mystery, just as the sharing of all baptized in these functions is a mystery

3. The Mystical character of the merciful Church

Moses, who was in great fellowship with Yahweh, wanted to see Him. As if he had forgotten who God really was. "Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray". And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But", he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live". And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen". (Ex, 33: 18-23). So it is with our relationship with the Church. We should not forget that the Church is a mystery; it is a space in which the living God effectively gives Himself to us.

The Second Vatican Council has made "mystery" a key concept of ecclesiology. The Greek word *mysterion* means "mystery" or "sacrament". With this in mind, Catholic ecclesiology has defined the Church as

a sacrament. A sacrament is the visible sign of an invisible grace. This is an efficacious grace. The Church is the primary sacrament; Christ is the pre-sacrament. It can be said that it is “the holy Church of sinners” as it accommodates those who are weak and sinful. We must talk about the Church as of a certain mystery. To speak about it, we must appeal to both faith and rationality. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, thanks to Saint Faustina and Saint John Paul II, it also became the sacrament of Divine Mercy for the entire body of Christians.

Unless we are aware of this dimension of mystery, we are unable to approach ecclesiology properly. The central concept of the Second Vatican Council in its teaching about the Church was not only the notion of the “people of God” or *communio*, but also the notion of “mystery”, which not only revealed the right image of the Church but also defended the mystery of God Himself. Important documents in this regard were the constitutions: *Sacrosanctum concilium*, *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes* as well as the decree *Unitatis redintegratio*.

The concept of “mystery” is very important because it gives impetus to a new understanding of the Church. The emphasis on the notion of “mystery” was a conscious return to the biblical and patristic vision of the Church. It altered its legalistic and triumphalist image. It is important to grasp the essence of the Church. The concept of “misterium” is related to its mystery. Reflections on the Church must take place in the spirit of faith, not only intellectually and formalistically. The notion of “misterium” thankfully dispenses with the institutionalization of the Church. The last Council returned to the biblical and patristic understanding of the Church. Before it, there had been a clear division between the clergy and the laity.

The Magisterium did not speak much about religious orders. With the introduction of the concept of *misterium*, it was possible to transform the image of the Church. Of course, this has not fully taken place. The conciliar texts clearly show the return to biblical

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images of the Church. The accent falls on the notion of revealed mystery. The Church is revealed as a community of baptized believers.

We cannot fully comprehend this mystery. However, we must attempt to draw an integral picture of ecclesial reality; as a whole in both its institutional and spiritual dimension. To reiterate: if the Church is reduced to a spiritual reality, paradoxically, we are faced with a lack of grace and truth. American Pentecostal movements (without ecclesial and sacramental dimensions) often exhibit the same misunderstanding of the Church with its institutional and clerical tendencies. It is important, however, to paint a complete picture of the Church and the fullness of the Church in the life of man and the world. Jesus Christ joins divine and human nature in a single person. He is both Man and God. The Christological paradigm secures a proper understanding of the nature of the Church. We must defend mystery both from excessive spirituality and over-institutionalization. Sometimes prayer is reduced to our feelings, whereas Christian anthropology teaches that there is not only a heart but also a will and an intellect. Great mystics such as Teresa of Ávila make clear that continuity is of primary importance. This continuity presupposes rationality, not just transient emotions. Unveiling the mystery of the Church demands continuous reform in order to purify its institutional character. We must recover this mystery so that spirituality can find its depth and normality.

The term *communio sanctorum* is related to the requirements of structures and institutions. This term is understood both as a community in salvation (*sancta*), and as a community with the saints (*sancti*). Participation in its salvific gifts is participation in the Eucharist and the sacraments. It is also the believer's entry point into communion with Christ; Jesus Christ Himself was a sacrament. At the same time, He is the source and the greatest salvific Good. *Communio sanctorum* also refers to relationships with the deceased and now live in the presence of God. The solidarity between the living and the dead is revealed in the meaning of the Church as a communion of love.

And as every sin destroys communion, so every act of love builds and strengthens it. As the Apostle Paul teaches: If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1Cor 12: 26-27). *Communio sanctorum* understood as *sancti* reveals two levels of unity. The earthly and heavenly Church are inextricably linked to the saints who intercede for us, and to the dead for whom we – the living – can attain purification through our offering of the Eucharist, prayer, fasting, alms and other good spiritual deeds. Therefore, the pilgrim Church does not cease to pray for the dead to be free from their sins (see 2 Macc 12:45).

After the Council, the position of the laity was clearly validated. The liturgy introduced the *participatio actuosa*, through which the liturgy was updated. The historicity of Revelation as well as the fact that the history of salvation has a dynamic character were also emphasized. Native languages were introduced into the liturgy and it was clearly stated that the Church was called to praise God. The liturgy and the sacramental image of the Church were emphasized. This led ecclesiology out of a certain ossification. It can be said that the debate about meaning of the Church must always take into account its mystical character, because only then can its institutional dimension be properly seen.

Without a doubt the last Council changed the understanding of the Church as an institution that encompasses all the baptized. Yet many Christians still continue to narrow this understanding to the hierarchy. The Church is still understood as a fortress from which salvation is meted out. Describing the Church in terms of its sacramental, mystical or hidden aspect not only guarantees an integral ecclesiology, but also restores a proper understanding of the institutional nature and visibility of the Church.⁹

⁹ C.f. A. Napiórkowski, *Reforma i rozwój Kościoła. Duch Boży i instytucja*, Cracow 2012, p. 189–197.

St. Faustina and St. John Paul II lead us into the mystery...

We are best guided into this dynamic of the visibility and invisibility of the Church, its institution and spirituality, earth and heaven, holiness and weakness, by the greatest friends of Christ – the saints. They understood their own life and attained salvation precisely in that space we know as the Church; they were simultaneously its subject and object. It is they who to the greatest extent change the visible image of the Church because they make it spiritual. They make their invaluable contribution to changing the institution, but they do not destroy or tear it down. They change the church, but they do not ruin it. Saints are charismatics who have their own specificity and visibility, but who are imitated by other believers to enter into deeper communion with Christ.

Doctors of the Church are constantly teaching us the truths about God contained in Revelation. The content of Revelation, whose custodian and interpreter is the Church, is rediscovered. And so it is with the “old” mystery of Divine Mercy, which has been rekindled and passed on to the believer. This was done by two great masters of faith: Saint Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938) and Saint John Paul II (1920–2005). Their elevation to sainthood authenticates their teaching, as it finds its relevance to the entire universal Church. And so Christians are strengthened in the mystery of the Church that feeds them with God’s Mercy and encourages them not to give up as they walk on the road towards the Risen One.

Why Doctors of the Church?

1. Model of theological knowledge (*eminens doctrina*)

Doctors of the Church were able to explain truths of the faith and correct errors, which appeared over the centuries. This was already the case in the fourth century when there was a discussion about belief in the Holy Trinity (the Arian controversy) or in Christ as both God and Man. These issues were solved by councils, which established dogmas that became touchstones of Christian orthodoxy.

1.1. Promoters and defenders of the Christian faith

Nearly all the theologians who deepened the faith and were given the title 'Doctors of the Church' were fathers of the early Church. They expounded on the dogma of the Holy Trinity (St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Augustine), explained the mystery of the Incarnation (St. Cyril of Alexandria) and also defended the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. These are not insignificant matters because even today they concern the essence of the Faith. Studying their works helps us to know God. The world tries to reduce Christ to humanity and to replace the Holy Spirit with the spirit of reason according to Hegel. Reading the works of the Doctors of the Church, Christians discover God and Man in

Christ and through their belief in Him, are able to understand many issues in life.

The history of the Church is not lacking in Doctors who opposed this practice and used human reason to explain the truths of the Catholic Church. St. Athanasius of Alexandria opposed the Arians. Their heresy diminished Christ and regarded Him as a being somewhere between God and man. This saint taught that the Son was “consubstantial” with the Father and that through communion with Him, Christians are able to unite with God. He wrote about this in “The Incarnation of the Word of God”, which gained him many opponents. He suffered greatly, following in the footsteps of His Master.¹ Being faithful to God’s truths requires the elimination of all heresies into which contemporary man falls, seduced by the mirage of a wrongly understood freedom that eliminates Christ.

Gnostics negated the divinity of the Holy Spirit. St. Basil opposed them, claiming that the Spirit was also God and therefore he should “also be named and praised together with the Father and the Son”². This was important, because the clarity of the faith endures in Christ’s teaching and does not create division. Renouncing the truth is in opposition to Christ’s teaching; the eternal truth that is meant to make man happy and show him a transcendent way of life. St. Gregory of Nyssa contributed greatly to opposing the heresies concerning the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit and those which questioned the perfect humanity of Christ.³

Like many other theologians, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes that Christian teaching about the Holy Trinity does not reflect

¹ C.f. E. Piotrowski, *Traktat o Trójcy Świętej*, in *Traktat o Trójcy Świętej*, Z. J. Kijas, *Traktat o Duchu Świętym i łasce*, Warszawa 2007, p. 112–113; G. Strzelczyk, *Traktat o Jesusie Chrystusie*, in J. Majewski, *Wprowadzenie do teologii dogmatycznej*, Warszawa 2005, p. 328.

² C.f. St. Basil, *Of the Holy Spirit*, SC 17, bis 348.

³ C.f. E. Piotrowski, *Traktat o Trójcy Świętej*, dz. cyt., p.120–124.

some abstract thinking about God and His internal life, but it is part of the reality of the Church, which continues to do Christ's redemptive work. These truths about the Divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit were ratified by various Councils and were approved by the Church Fathers. This confirms their wisdom. During the Second Vatican Council, John Paul II also spoke up wisely and courageously, highlighting and explaining the problems of the 20th century Church and he is now a candidate to be a Doctor of the Church.

Among Doctors of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure hold a special place. The former taught that all the faithful need the holy teaching of the Church to achieve salvation. He called Christ the first and main teacher [Doctor] of the faith, who has the fullness of grace to teach⁴. Although his thinking is dominated by metaphysics, he does not omit the aspect of the faith. As a testimony to the saint's greatness, at the Council of Trent only two books were placed on the altar – the Bible and his *Summa Theologicae*.

St. Bonaventure emphasized of the value of the Cross. For this reason he was known as the Doctor of the Passion (*Doctor Passionis*).⁵ He taught that one could not understand Scripture without a knowledge of the Cross; it is the key that opens the gate to God's wisdom. For him, the Cross was fundamental to Christian existence and knowledge. In *Collationes* he proposes a vision of the world in which the Cross stands at the center. He reduces theology to knowledge of the Cross,⁶ arguing in a mystic way, that its meaning lies in the willingness to help mankind in its suffering and death.

Since the Second Vatican Council, it has become possible to confer the title 'Doctor of the Church' to women. This broke the

⁴ C.f. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III a, 7, 7; 42, 4.

⁵ C.f. M. Sulej, *Świętego Bonawentury teologia krzyża*, Niepokalanów 1994, p. 6.

⁶ C.f. St. Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron sive iluminantiones Ecclesiae* I 30 (V 334b).

age-old tradition of conferring it only to men. This is proof that the teachings of the Doctors do not depend on religious ordination or function held in the Church. This underlines the role of the mystic experience and not as was previously the case, that of theological education. The wisdom of women is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Endowed with a particular gift, they have a transcendent way of doing things and possess a subtle sensitivity to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Let us not forget that the true “Doctor of the Church” is the Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus to His disciples at Pentecost. It is He who decides about the internal life of the Church.

All the Doctors of the Church are united in their desire to create an image of God among the faithful. They convince them of God’s closeness to man and that He is with them throughout the whole of their lives. This was how St. Augustine saw it, believing that God could be found inside us: “Do not go outside”, the convert says, but “return to within yourself; truth dwells in the inner man; and if you find that your nature is changeable, transcend yourself. But remember, when you transcend yourself, you are transcending a soul that reasons. Reach, therefore, to where the light of reason is lit”⁷. Having experienced the closeness of God, he writes: “For You were more deeply within me than even that which was most intimately mine, and at the same time You were so far beyond me that I could not reach You with my thoughts”⁸.

St. Alphonsus of Liguori and St. Therese of the Child Jesus understood this closeness in a similar way, trusting in God’s mercy. Their vision of God has an impact on people and allows them to experience His mercy, recognize their dignity and enjoy their freedom. Recalling God as Father, they let His closeness, fatherhood and friendship be known.

⁷ St. Augustine, *True Religion* 39, 72. Official translation from L’Osservatore Romano.

⁸ St. Augustine, *Confessions* 3, 6, 11.

St. Jerome taught that the Word of God should not be approached from the viewpoint of academic curiosity or cultural superiority but it should be received as a material for meditation and a call to daily conversion. The saint wrote as follows: “Love Sacred Scripture and wisdom will love you; love it tenderly, and it will protect you; honour it and you will receive its caresses. May it be for you as your necklaces and your earrings”.⁹

The Doctors of the Church attract our attention with their knowledge and wisdom. Their writings are still relevant and have an animating strength. The truth about the Triune God, which they defended, is still valid today.

1.2. Theology as a means of knowing God

It is worth mentioning, that nearly all the Doctors of the Church left works which have been read throughout the ages and been translated into many languages. John Chrysostom wrote 17 treatises, 700 homilies, commentaries to Matthew and Paul (Letter to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians and Hebrews) in addition to 241 letters. His catechesis to the catechumens is also particularly noteworthy. He became famous for arranging “a successful marriage between the Christian message and the Hellenistic culture which had (...) a lasting influence on the Eastern and Western Churches”.¹⁰ Contemporary popes have referred to this as the element which has advanced the cause of ecumenism.

The Life of Anthony by St. Athanasius became such a popular work that it was translated into many Eastern languages and Latin. The saint contributed greatly to the development of monastic life in the East. St. Gregory of Nyssa, in turn, wrote an important book on the life of Moses depicting him as a man searching for God.

⁹ St. Jerome, *Epistulae* 130, 20.

¹⁰ C.f. Benedict XVI, *Address at the Patriarchal Cathedral of Saint George in the Phanar*, Vatican 2006.

Although he was the hero of the Old Testament, he is an example for everyone who is on a pilgrimage like him, searching for contact with God so as to confirm the truth about his life, which is futile or empty if it is outside of the Lord's mercy.

One of the most frequently read books in Christian antiquity was St. Augustine's *Confessions*. It reveals a spiritual journey and the conversion of man overcome with a passion for God who searches for and desires to meet Him. These yearnings were fulfilled in the life of St. Augustine – the result of his sincere belief in Christ. We know that the Lord answers everyone's prayers and is generous with His graces.

St. Teresa of Avila, in her *Interior Castle*, gives a different interpretation of a spiritual journey and the full development of a Christian life as inspired by the workings of the Holy Spirit. Her metaphor of chambers, allows us to discover the truth about ourselves and the Creator. St. John of the Cross, a poet and mystic, wrote in the same vein. These saints are classic Christian mystics. They teach us that we can talk to God like a caring Father; one who will rebuke us when necessary but who will also bless us.

And what can be said of Peter Canisius' three catechisms for children and young people? There are 200 editions of this catechism! Up until the Second Vatican Council, the textbook on moral theology was the work of St. Alfonsus of Liguori. Inspired saints gave their works different literary forms. Among them there were even textbooks, all written so that God's truth might prevail.

1.3. Doctors: an example of ecumenism

In St. Peter's Basilica in Rome there are various statutes of Doctors of the Church. St. Athanasius and St. John Chrysostom represent the Eastern Church while St. Augustine and St. Ambrose represent the Western Church.

What does this symbolism mean? First of all, it emphasizes Rome as the doctrinal center after the Reformation. The abovementioned Doctors of the Church influenced the doctrine of the universal

church and its mission. In order to underline their merits, Pope Leon XIII also included the following as Doctors of the church: Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Jerusalem and John Damascene. This is not only evidence of love for the Eastern tradition but in making constant reference to it the Church also underlines the truth of tradition. In this way, it reminds us that the truths proclaimed by these traditions, do not constitute obstacles but for the sake of the common good, it encourages us to overcome them. These saintly figures and their works contain a rich and varied content. They are the ones who ask questions of us and who enrich Christianity.

The teaching of the early Doctors of the Church helps us to rediscover the unity of our brothers and sisters in Christ, for which Jesus himself prayed for the day before his death on the cross “that they may be one” (J17: 21). St Francis de Sales was aware of this in the pre-Reformation era as he took part in talks with the Protestants. He realized that while theological discussion was necessary, personal relations and love were more effective. They are the heart of evangelization.

In this context, it is worth mentioning that in November 2004, John Paul II presented the precious relics of John Chrysostom and Gregory Nazianzus, to the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Pope then said, that this gesture was for both churches, ‘a happy occasion which enables us to cleanse our wounded memory and strengthen our strivings for unity’¹¹. During his apostolic visit to Turkey, Pope Benedict, in the Cathedral of the Patriarch of Constantinople, reminded us of “the outstanding saints and pastors who have watched over the See of Constantinople, among them Saint Gregory of Nazianzus and Saint John Chrysostom, whom the West also honors as Doctors of the Church. Truly, they are worthy intercessors for us before the Lord”¹²

¹¹ C.f. Palladius, *Dialogus de vita Joannis Chrysostomi* 5: SCh 341, p. 108–110.

¹² C.f. Benedict XVI, *Address in the Cathedral of the Patriarch of Constantinople*, Vatican.

The Doctors of the Church are a true sign of ecumenism. Yearning for past times when Christians lived in the full unity of faith and brotherly love, they urge us to return to those times and remind us of our sins. In a divided world, the international unity of the Church, is to be greatly valued. The long history of Christians, marked by a variety of divisions, appears to be coming together again and returning to the source of their unity – Jesus. Despite divisions, Christians are called to follow the path towards full unity, as characterized by the early apostolic community, for which the Church strives today, thus enriching the heritage of the early Doctors. A deeper understanding of the gift of unity by both the Eastern and Western churches will decide about the future of Europe and the world. What then, stands in the way of unity, if we have our intercessors in heaven where there is no division into Eastern and Western Churches or any other for that matter.

2. Models of holiness

A Doctor of the Church is not only known for his/her intellectual capacity, but also for the enlightened wisdom given to them by God i.e. sanctity. The Doctors of the Church, who receive God's inspiration during prayer know full well that the activity of the Church cannot be only external in nature, even when if it is effective and praiseworthy but must also be infused with unity with God.

2.1. Compatibility of the intellect and morality

We know that people of genius bring about benefits for the whole of mankind but sometimes they can also bring about harm. Koch discovered a vaccine for tuberculosis and saved the lives thousands of people but the same cannot be said of those who invented the atomic bomb. New discoveries are often granted prizes, such as the Nobel. This was once a prestigious prize, which also took into consideration the moral character of the candidate. Today these

prizes are given to people of dubious repute. How was it possible not to give John Paul II The Nobel Peace prize, he who resolved so many conflicts around the world and opposed so many wars?

The Church values knowledge however, it does not ignore the issue of morality. A Doctor of the Church must possess spiritual maturity. Some of them were referred to as saints even during their lifetime. This was right. So it was in the case of Alfonsus Maria de Liguori and John Paul II. This is so important today when God is being eliminated from political, social and cultural life. It would therefore be good to listen to some wise and holy people who say that a world based only on the intellect, with no spiritual dimension, has no future.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus, who chose a monastic life, wrote: "Nothing seems to me greater than this: to silence one's senses, to emerge from the flesh of the world, to withdraw into oneself, no longer to be concerned with human things other than what is strictly necessary; to converse with oneself and with God, to lead a life that transcends the visible; to bear in one's soul divine images, ever pure, not mingled with earthly or erroneous forms; truly to be a perfect mirror of God and of divine things, and to become so more and more, taking light from light...; to enjoy, in the present hope, the future good, and to converse with angels; to have already left the earth even while continuing to dwell on it, borne aloft by the spirit".¹³ St. Gregory of Nyssa spoke in a similar manner, as he encouraged others to an internal purification of spirit in order to be close to God: "If, with a diligent and attentive standard of living, you will wash away the bad things that have deposited upon your heart, the divine beauty will shine in you... Contemplating yourself, you will see within you He who is the desire of your heart, and you will be blessed"¹⁴. We must therefore speak of Jesus and hold Him in

¹³ St. Gregory Nazianzus, *Oratio* 2, 7: SC 247, 96.

¹⁴ St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Beatitudinibus* 6: PG 44, 1272AB.

our hearts. This is the basis of a perfect life according to the gospel; namely through service and offering oneself to the Most High. The words of St. Augustine can act here as a guide: *Amo et fac quod vis* („Love and do what you will”). This is a perfect union of man’s love and freedom. Man’s existence thus becomes everyday new and extraordinary, because it achieves the perfect measure of sanctity.

This seems like an impossible task to fulfill in everyday life. We remember the misery of man as he tries to escape from God’s mercy. The Doctors of the Church, mentioned above were great men and women who were able to make spiritual contact with their Creator.

The Doctors of the Church are examples of wisdom obtained through prayer. Only this kind of wisdom has apostolic strength; only this kind of wisdom reaches out to people and inspires them to live a perfect life. “The spirit who <spoke through the prophets>bestowing wisdom and knowledge on them, constantly inspires people who are looking for the truth, proposes creative ways of knowing and understanding the mystery of God”. These words were spoken by Pope Benedict XVI during the *Regina coeli* on October 7th 2012 when he announced St Hildegard of Bingen and St. John of Avila, Doctors of the Church. Asked by the Bishop of Cordoba to write a few words, a Spanish priest made the following interesting observation: “All those who try to reform others, must start from themselves. Otherwise, no one will believe them until they see changes in their own lives”.¹⁵ Their conversions influenced others because they faithfully followed the crucified Christ. Through this evangelizing synthesis (externally) and contemplative one (internally), they became preachers of the Word, disseminators and defenders of the faith. They animated the unity of believers in Christ and experienced the fruits of trusting in God’s grace by devoting themselves to pastoral ministry.

¹⁵ Rev. S. Gryga, *Złoty wiek mistyki hiszpańskiej. Nowe drogi okres zmagania i cierpień duchowych (1525–1570)*, Kraków 1996, p. 26.

2.2. The cross as a confirmation of wisdom

The Doctors of the Church teach us that the measure of human life is not to be found in abundance and prosperity but in knowing God, which enables a defense of the truth. This takes place through the sacrifice of the cross; the royal road which leads to the peak of humanity. Wisdom is to be sought in the suffering of the cross. Christ revealed this wisdom to us through His death.

Every Doctor of the Church experiences the cross in a different way. For St. Athanasius of Alexandria it meant spending sixteen years in exile because of the conflict with the heretics. St. Cyril of Jerusalem was exiled three times and St. Gregory of Nyssa was accused of embezzlement by the heretics and had to leave his bishop's seat.

Others were imprisoned. The most beautiful mystical poetry of the dark night of the soul was written by St. John of the Cross while in prison. St. John of Avila also wrote his most known ascetic-mystic treatise *Audi filia* in prison. In dark prison cells, they wrote about the perfection of Christianity as the wedding of the bride with Christ the bridegroom. John Paul II, also a potential Doctor of the Church, had his own cross in life. During World Youth Day in Toronto in 2003 he confessed: Although I have lived through much darkness, under harsh totalitarian regimes, I have seen enough evidence to be unshakably convinced that no difficulty, no fear is so great that it can completely suffocate *the hope that springs eternal in the hearts of the young*. Even a tiny flame lifts the heavy lid of night”.¹⁶ How great the faith of the saints must have been to take on all the sufferings and troubles of their vocation for the sake of souls and the Church.

The Doctors of the Church teach us that because they are united to Christ, they can survive the most frightening darkness a soul can experience and be sure that in participating in Christ's

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Homily during World Youth Day Toronto, 28 VII 2002*, Vatican 2002, nr. 5.

agony in the Garden, the workings of the Holy Spirit become transparent and bring sweetness. Love of the Church, flowing from the love of Christ is the main stimulus for their service. These are the people, who as the Gospel teaches, have brought forth fruit by using the talents they were given and cooperating with God's grace.

2.3. Witnesses

Doctors of the Church are also witnesses. Pope Paul VI's famous paraphrase is still relevant today. Everything becomes clear when he added that the authentic renewal of the Church begins with holiness. The Doctors of the Church teach us how to be tireless witnesses of God's presence and work. Not only do they combine various strategies of preaching the Gospel but they are witnesses to it. They are servants of the Gospel. This is why the Church needs saints but also it reminds the clergy and the laity of the initial apostolic zeal in preaching the Gospel. Christian life is enriched where prayer flourishes.

The Doctors teach us that full humanity is achieved through communion with God, by being a light to others, by understanding human existence and its manifold needs. Only in this way, can we recognize the established order in the world and so cooperate in its development. Such an attitude can be a model for others.

Faith is the source of holiness on which the bond between the Creator and creation is built and develops. The saints say a firm "no" to the man of the 21st century, who in his arrogance and recklessness sometimes calls himself "a believer" but lives as he sees fit. They encourage us to seek the word of God because it holds the future of the Church and the key to the mystical union between God and man.

3. The teaching of the Doctors is knowledge for all

An important criterion for granting the title Doctor of the Church is the universalism of the candidate's spiritual attitude.

Why Doctors of the Church?

As early as the VII century, St. Isidore of Seville wrote: Just as wise and learned Doctors prescribe different medications for different ailments of the body, since every illness has its own medicine, so also a Doctor of the Church applies a remedy for everyone and for all. He teaches everything that is needed for a given individual, according to his age, gender and profession¹⁷. There is no need for a university lecture or academic discussion but a personal approach accented by the whole Church.

Doctors of the Church also provide spiritual sustenance for people from different walks of life, and even those outside the Church, enabling them to establish a relationship with Christ our Savior. They repeat the words of St. Thomas Aquinas that “Christian theology is concerned with God who was not made by man but who made man. So it is more contemplative than practical”¹⁸.

The writings of the Doctors of the Church bring words of comfort, and their lives are an example to those afflicted with all kinds of misery. St. Augustine spoke at the Imperial Court and addressed the simple people of Hippo¹⁹. He wanted to give up dictating his great work *De Trinitate*, as he thought it was too difficult and of little use. Pope Gregory IX referred to St. Anthony of Padua as a treasury of Holy Scripture, as he spoke not only to cardinals but also to ordinary people and heretics, who grew in faith thanks to him. St. Alfonsus Maria Liguori was active in evangelization and catechesis among the poorest strata of Neapolitan society. He preached and taught the poor the basic truths of faith. St. John of Avila, speaking to the representatives of the highest social classes, gave an example of a traveling apostolate. As a popular preacher, he wanted to reach everyone. Following Benedict XVI, one can say that:

¹⁷ c.f St. Isidore of Seville, *Book of Sentences*, 3.

¹⁸ c.f St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q 1, a 4.

¹⁹ C.f St. Augustine, *Epistulae (Letters)* 169, 1, 1.

those who draw near to God do not withdraw from men, but rather become truly close to them.²⁰

The Doctors of the Church are also guides to those among God's people called to be theologians. The work of the saints touches their pride if they preach theses, which are far removed from the truths in the Bible. They lack in prayer, meditation and are devoid of the light of the Holy Spirit. The teaching which the Doctors offer the Church remains a gift and a task. Herein lies their richness; it allows them to understand the world and change it for the better.

4. Doctors as renewers of the Church

The Doctors of the Church contribute to a spiritual renewal of the Church. St. Gregory the Great was a reformer of the papacy and the Church. St. Peter Damiani condemned the sins of the clergy and contributed to the renewal of religious life. St. John of the Cross did something similar thing within his religious community. St. Robert Bellarmine argued against the Reformation from the view of Church tradition in his work *Controversies*. St. Francis de Sales was the first to write about the role of the laity in the Church, which was not taken up again until the Second Vatican Council. Also today, it would be worth reawakening the laity to take a more active part in the life of the Church. This is a great opportunity for the Church and a good way of encouraging new vocations.

The Doctors of the Church have also enriched the culture. Their service toward people in "the heart of the world" broke down the barriers between the *sacred* and *profane* (*sacrum and profanum*). They did not separate these two aspects but included people's everyday life and work into the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. As a result, Christianity became open to new social issues. It created teachings

²⁰ Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Deus Caritas est*, Vatican nr. 42.

Why Doctors of the Church?

concerned with definite answers which could be understood by a specific generation.

The Doctors of the Church showed the true *sensus Ecclesiae* meaning of the Church in the face of divisions that were taking place. They were open to both people and ideas, without belittling Catholic values. They did this because they were apostles of man, with a desire to save all and their true witness to the faith melted icy hearts and opened up the minds of Christians. Doctors of the Church doctors did not lament a regress of morality. They believed that only with Christ as a foundation, the prototype of all behaviors, could the world be built and they looked to the future with hope.

The Doctors of the Church are a gift from Providence. Many were willing to die in defense of Christ. Even today they are the key to recognizing the signs of the times. They encourage us not to neglect our friendship with our Savior and, in His name, to overcome evil, defend God, the Gospel and the Cross. They were open to inspiration, faithful to the Gospel and discovered new ideas for the times in which they lived and shaped Christianity.

* * *

The achievements of the Doctors of the Church reveal the purpose of human life, and remind us of the basic truth about God and man who searches for the full and ultimate meaning of life and the cosmos. Their knowledge and attitude to life reveals the essence of man, who is resistant to various trends and changing socio-political circumstances. The primacy of God, as shown by the Doctors of the Church, demands that we humbly learn how to interpret it.

Paweł Warchoń OFMConv

St. Faustina Kowalska among the female Doctors of the Church

Four of the 35 Doctors of the Church are women: St. Catherine of Sienna [died 1380], St. Teresa of Avila [died 1582], St. Teresa of the Child Jesus [died 1897] and St. Hildegard of Bingen [died 1179]. The group includes one person from Italy, Spain, France and Germany. There are three sisters among them (two Carmelites and a Benedictine) and one lay tertiary Dominican. The Church granted them the title Doctor of the Church because they brought us closer to the mystery of God and significantly increased the richness of the Christian experience.

During the last Divine Mercy Congress (Cracow, 2011) its participants asked Pope Benedict XVI to consider conferring the title of Doctor of the Church to St. Faustina Kowalska. The first paper on the subject was given by Rev. Prof. Jan Machniak.¹ According to the theologian from Cracow, the title should be conferred to her based on her closeness to God, knowledge about the mystery of the Trinity and her conveying of Jesus's message in the form of the Divine Mercy chaplet to the whole world. Sister Faustina experienced union

¹ See. J. Machniak, *Święta Siostra Faustyna Kowalska (1905–1938) doktorem Kościoła*. Paper given during the Divine Mercy Congress, Cracow, 2011.

with Christ through His passion, leading her through the dark night of the soul, abandonment and loneliness to a mystical marriage. This enabled her to experience the mystery of God: the internal life of the Trinity, the creation of man and the world as well as salvation which took place through Christ's death and Resurrection. She was also able to discover her own vocation, overcoming all her adversities with God's grace – the lack of a theological education, misunderstanding by others and jealousy in her community.

1. An Apostle of Mercy

St. Faustina² reminded the Church of an important truth about Divine Mercy. She was convinced that she had been called to renew it. The truth about Divine Mercy goes back as far as the

² Faustina was born on 25th August 1905 in the village of Glogowiec, in the voivodeship of Lodz. At the age of sixteen she had to help support her family financially and undertook work in Aleksandrow near Lodz, and later in Lodz itself. At the age of nineteen she had a vision of Jesus exhausted, stripped of His garments and covered in wounds. On Jesus' advice, she left for Warsaw. She was accepted into the Congregation of Our Lady of Mercy on 1st August 1925. After completing her postulate in Warsaw, she began her two year novitiate in Cracow, where she received the name Maria Faustina. She took her first religious vows on 30th March 1928 and her perpetual vows on 1st May 1933. The Divine Master then made her aware of the fact that He had chosen her and called her to fulfill a special mission in His Church, to be "the secretary of My mercy". During one of the visions in Płock, Faustina received her calling from the Lord, to commission a painting of the Merciful Jesus and to establish the Feast of Divine Mercy on the first Sunday after Easter. She only manages to comply with the request after her superiors transfer her to the convent in Vilnius in 1933. In 1935, Jesus taught Faustina the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. She then heard a calling to establish a new congregation. On May 11th 1936, Faustina left permanently for Cracow. In October 1937, Jesus recommended that she have a special devotion to the hour of His death. This was His final request. She spent the last five months of her life in hospital in 1938. On 17th September 1938 she was brought back to the convent where she died on October 5th that year.

Old Covenant but it was fully revealed in the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. The devotion proposed by St. Faustina includes worship of the Divine Mercy on the first Sunday after Easter³, the chaplet of Divine Mercy⁴, the Holy Hour commemorating Christ's death⁵ during which is Eucharistic Adoration or The Way of the

³ "I desire that there be a Feast of Mercy. I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the First Sunday after Easter: that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy. I desire that priests proclaim this great mercy of Mine towards souls of sinners. Let the sinner not be afraid to approach Me. The flames of mercy are burning Me-damoring to be spent: I want to pour them out upon these souls". (*Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska- Divine Mercy in my Soul*, Marian Press: Stockbridge MA, 2005 49–50; further: *Diary*). My daughter, tell the whole world about My inconceivable mercy. I desire that the Feast of Mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially for poor sinners. On that day the very depths of My tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the Fount of My Mercy; the soul that will go to Confession and receive Holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. On that day, all the divine floodgates through which graces flow are opened; let no soul fear to draw near to Me, even though its sins be as scarlet. My mercy is so great that no mind, be it man or angel, will be able to fathom it throughout all eternity. Everything that exists has come forth from the very depths of My most tender mercy. Every soul in its relation to Me will contemplate My love and mercy throughout eternity. The Feast of Mercy emerged from My very depths of tenderness. It is My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter. Mankind will not have peace until it turns to the fount of My Mercy" [*Diary* 699].

⁴ "Through the chaplet you will obtain everything if what you ask for is compatible with My will" (*Diary* 1731). "Whoever will recite it, will receive great mercy at the hour of death (...) even if there were a sinner most hardened, if he were to recite this chaplet only once, he would receive grace from My infinite mercy" (*Diary* 687).

⁵ "I remind you, My daughter, that as often as you hear the clock strike the third hour, immerse yourself completely in My mercy, adoring and glorifying it; invoke its omnipotence for the whole world(...) In this hour you can obtain everything for yourself and for others for the asking; it was the hour of grace for the whole world- mercy triumphed over justice (...) Try your best to make the Stations of the Cross in this hour provided that your duties permit it; and if you

Cross and spreading devotion to Divine Mercy⁶. The image of the Merciful Jesus, clothed in a white garment with two rays emanating from His breast, should also be worshipped⁷.

The essence of mercy is trust in God, which every person needs whether in joy or in sorrow, whether in enthusiasm or discouragement. Józef Tischner wrote: "Only then can Christ the ruler, turn our lowliness into a divine lowliness".⁸

Faustina revealed a special mystery – God's desire for His likeness to be renewed in man who has been degraded by sin.

are not able to make the Stations of the Cross, then at least step into the chapel, immerse yourself in prayer there where you happen to be, if only for a very brief moment" [Diary 1572].

⁶ "My daughter, do whatever is within your power to spread devotion to My mercy. I will make up for what you lack (...) When a soul approaches Me with trust, I will fill it with such an abundance of graces that it cannot contain them within itself, but radiates them to other souls. Souls who spread the honor of My mercy, I shield through their entire lives as a tender mother her infant (...) [Diary, 1075] "To priests who proclaim and extol My mercy, I will give wondrous power; I will anoint their words and touch the hearts of those to whom they will speak" [Diary, 1521].

⁷ In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand [was] raised in the gesture of blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside at the breast, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale. In silence I kept my gaze fixed on the Lord; my soul was struck with awe, but also with great joy. After a while, Jesus said to me, Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You. I desire that this image be venerated, first in your chapel, and [then} throughout the world. I promise that the soul that will venerate this image will not perish. I also promise victory over [its] enemies already here on earth, especially at the hour of death. When I told this to my confessor, I received this for a reply: "That refers to your soul". He told me, "Certainly, paint God's image in your soul". When I came out of the confessional, I again heard words such as these: My image already is in your soul. I desire that there be a Feast of Mercy. I want this image, which you will paint with a brush, to be solemnly blessed on the first Sunday after Easter; that Sunday is to be the Feast of Mercy. [Diary 47–49].

⁸ C.f. J. Tischner, *Miłość nas rozumie*, Cracow 2005, p. 172.

The message, which was directed to the whole world⁹ and proposed new forms of worship, was met with lively interest among believers. In this way, the phenomenon of Sister Faustina among the women Doctors' of the Church is expressed through prayers said in various places such as the Shine of Divine Mercy, parishes, homes, catechetical centers or places of residence. None of the previous Doctors of the Church left prayers that were so enticing as the ones taught by Faustina. In this lies the mystery of the Divine Chaplet, the greatness of the Feast of Divine Mercy and the image of the Merciful Jesus. Furthermore she reminded us of the hour of Jesus's death – three o'clock.

St. Faustina's doctrine is closely related to that of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. The French mystic revealed what is most important in God – merciful love¹⁰. The theology of the last century changed focus from God's justice to His merciful love; mercy came before justice¹¹. She believed the problem of sin did not only refer to her own but also to the wounded love of God wounded love and to man, as such. The paradox of St. Teresa's charism, as with the paradox of Divine Mercy is that as we are led into an awareness of our sin and we discover how to trust in the Father, in other words we replace fear of justice with hope for salvation. In this

⁹ See Diary, 1588.

¹⁰ C.f. J. W. Gogola, *Mała droga św. Teresy od Dzieciątka Jezus*, in: J. Machniak, J. W. Gogola (red.), *Mała droga zupełnie nowa. Materiały z sympozjum*, Kraków 1997, p. 9–26; J. I. Adamska, *Wszyscy kochać mnie będą. Święta Teresa od Dzieciątka Jezus*, Poznań 1997.

¹¹ John Paul II, *Divini amoris scientia*. Apostolic Letter issued on the occasion of proclaiming St. Therese of the Child Jesus a Doctor of the Church, Vatican 1997, nr. 8: In God's mercy she contemplated and adored all the divine perfections, because "even his justice (and perhaps even more so than the other perfections) seems to me clothed in love.

See. J. I. Adamska, *Sprawiedliwość i miłosierdzie Boże w doktrynie świętej Teresy od Dzieciątka Jezus*, "Karmel", 3 (1999), p. 15–22.

lies the evangelical meaning of St. John's words: Whoever accepts the Word Incarnate, will be born again in God and will become a child of God (see J 1:12)

When St. Faustina surrendered herself to God's merciful love, she gave it a new practical meaning. The Jansenist fear of dangers was replaced with the joy of hope – expressed in the words "Jesus, I trust in You". St. Therese's 'Little Way' became the Faustina's "Great Way". Both women desired to hide themselves in the embrace of God, "the best Father"¹² and "tender mother",¹³ by confessing the Gospel at the heart of which is Christ who close to the human heart and who tenderly embraces every human being by the power of His love. This closeness is even greater than that of one's parents.

Prayer connects us to God. For Faustina prayer revealed mercy in both word and deed¹⁴. In this way, she was close to the Spanish mystic. Prayer is always a test of the Church's apostolate and love, its law and duty. John Paul II makes reference to this in his letter to the Superior General of the Carmelites on the 400th anniversary of the death of St. Teresa of Avila, citing the encyclical *Dives in misericordia*: "The more the human conscience succumbs to secularization, loses its sense of the very meaning of the word "mercy", moves away from God and distances itself from the mystery of mercy, the more the

¹² "My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls and especially for poor sinners. If only they could understand that I am the best of Fathers to them and that it is for them that the Blood and Water flowed from My Heart as from a fount overflowing with mercy". (Diary 367) .

¹³ "When a soul sees and realizes the gravity of its sins, when the whole abyss of the misery into which it immersed itself is displayed before its eyes, let it not despair, but with trust let it throw itself into the arms of My mercy, as a child into the arms of its beloved mother. (...) Tell them that no soul that has called upon My mercy has been disappointed or brought to shame. I delight particularly in a soul which has placed its trust in My goodness". (Diary 1541).

¹⁴ C.f. Diary 724.

Church has the right and the duty to appeal to the God of mercy “with loud cries”. (c.f. Hebrews 5:7).¹⁵

St. Faustina’s life and activity, devoted to the service of mercy is linked to that of St. Catherine. The Italian saint’s treatise *The Dialogue of Divine Providence*, is one of the great treasures of mystic literature. Her inspiration for the work came from her experience of division in the Church as well as her boundless trust in God’s mercy which opened up the way to His heart. “Providence (...) will not forget anyone who trusts (...) truly, but will turn away from those, who in despair (...) only trust in themselves”.¹⁶

The saint from Sienna perceives Divine Mercy as the gift of the Word Incarnate. When the Son of God took on a human form, He combined Divine and human nature. This why He is the bridge we all must cross so as not to drown in the injustice of the world. In a similar way, she praises the greatness of His mercy, which defeated death and is present in heaven and on earth. Even in the darkness of hell, the saints alleviate the deserved punishment of the condemned. The Holy Spirit bestows His mercy¹⁷ everywhere filling both temporal and eternal space. Faustina understood this in a similar way recognizing mercy as “God’s greatest attribute”¹⁸ which is the crowning of all His works.¹⁹

The Polish mystic’s recalling of mercy reveals anew the closeness of the Creator; His fatherhood and motherhood. This vision of God has a great influence on the spiritual life of religious communities and everyone else. People can learn real love from Christ, become more like Him and therefore feel loved and accepted.

¹⁵ John Paul II Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, Vatican 1980, nr. 15.

¹⁶ St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialog o Bożej Opatrzności, czyli księga Boskiej nauki*, tłum. L. Staff, Poznań 1987, p. 263.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 66.

¹⁸ Diary 301.

¹⁹ Ibid.

2. Worshiper of the heart of Christ

Whence does the trust in Christ that St. Faustina proposes come? The final words of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy recall the blood and water which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus: “O Blood and Water, which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus, as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You”.²⁰ The recitation of this prayer is associated with the image of the Merciful Jesus from which two rays emanate. At St. Faustina’s request Christ explains: “The pale ray stands for the Water that makes souls righteous, the red ray stands for the Blood which is the life of souls”.²¹ Water is an instrument of God’s justice that does not punish those who make atonement to God. Blood on the other hand, signifies the working of a merciful God, who grants eternal life to those who show repentance for their sins. St. Faustina wrote the following in her *Diary*: “While there is still time, let all avail themselves from the fount of my mercy; let them benefit from the blood and water which gushed forth for them”.²² When Sister Faustina says that blood signifies “the life of souls” we see the passion and mercy of Christ in the sacraments in which He gives the chalice of His blood to the faithful. Christ explains the practical significance of this and we are reminded of it in a fragment from St. John’s Gospel which recalls how the centurion pierced Jesus’s side (J 19: 34-37). Benedict XVI also contemplated this text when he wrote that: “Blood and water flowed from the pierced side of Jesus. True to Zachariah’s prophecy, the Church in every century has looked upon the pierced heart and recognized therein the source of blessings that are symbolized in blood and

²⁰ Diary 187; Diary 309.

²¹ Diary 299.

²² Diary 848.

water. The prophecy prompts a search for a deeper understanding of what really happened there.²³

St. Catherine provides a meaningful answer to the Pope's question. During one of her spiritual encounters she asked Jesus why his side was pierced and why His wounded heart bled so profusely. Jesus answered that this was the result of His infinite love for mankind. His pierced heart symbolized this.²⁴ Then Jesus said to her: "through the outpouring of blood and water, I have shown you the holy baptism of water which you receive through the power of blood. I have also shown you the baptism of blood (...) through my pierced side, where you will find the secret of my heart. There you will discover, that I love you more than I could show by suffering that ends".²⁵ Christ has shown us His infinite love, as demonstrated by His personal "baptism of blood and the fire (...) of love, because His blood was shed out of love; and it is given to Christians and to everyone who wants to accept universal baptism, in which a soul unites itself to the blood (...); it is a baptism of water, in which the water unites with the blood and fire. To demonstrate this to you, I allowed blood and water to flow from my side".²⁶

In her letters, she advises us to immerse ourselves in the blood of Christ, through which we experience the very special love of God. This is the common theological idea that links Catherine and Faustina, both of whom perceive the blood of Christ as the deepest mystery of Christian existence.

St. Teresa of the Child Jesus also experienced the blood of Christ. While looking at a picture of the crucified Christ, she wrote: "I was stuck by the sight of blood flowing from one of God's hands.

²³ J. Ratzinger / Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* vol. II Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 2011, p. 225.

²⁴ St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialog...*, p. 128-130.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, s. 130.

I was overcome by a great sorrow at the thought, that the blood was flowing to the ground but no one could be bothered to accept it, so I decided to remain spiritually at the foot of the cross and collect this Divine dew which flowed from it, convinced that I was then to pour it out on souls”.²⁷ From then on she tried to remain spiritually at the foot of the cross, to contemplate the blood and grant it to souls. With a holy desire she wrote that she wanted to water souls with this immaculate blood which could wash away every offence.²⁸

The 12th century saint, Hildegard of Bingen reveals in her work *Scivias* (Know the way) the redemptive worth of the blood which flowed from the side of Christ. In one of her visions, she describes how the Church receives part of the redemptive blood, which flows from the side of Christ in the chalice, while the other half cleanses the Church²⁹. As the altar on which the Eucharist is

²⁷ St. Therese of the Child Jesus, *Dzieje duszy*, Kraków 1984, p. 105.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 107.

²⁹ And then I saw that as long as the Son of God hung on the cross, that image of the woman already mentioned, like the glittering ray that was shifting from the old council, was guided in His direction by divine power and later she was raised up and washed in the blood which poured from his side. And by the will of the heavenly Father, she was united with Him in happy matrimony, generously gifted with His flesh and blood. And I heard a voice calling out from heaven: “Oh Son, this will be your bride for the renewal of my people, she will be a mother to him, renewing the souls by the salvation of the Spirit and water”. But also there, after reading the Gospel of peace and offering sacrifices on the altar to be consecrated, when the priest intoned the song of glory to Almighty God – “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of hosts”, so as to start celebrations of the sacred mysteries, suddenly a lightning of immense clarity descended from the skies to the sacrifice itself, and all sunk into its light, just as the sun illuminates what its rays penetrate. And while she was so illuminated, he invisibly lifted her to the mysterious places of heaven and lowered her again to the altar, like someone who inhales air, and then exhales it out. In this way the victim was transformed into the true Body and true blood, although human eyes have seen only bread and wine. When I looked at what was going on, suddenly there appeared in the mirror the images of the birth of Christ,

said is an extension of the cross, the Church offers this treasure unceasingly to the Father as a gift from the Son. Thanks to this, the mysteries of Jesus's life are present in the Eucharist and the mystery of His pierced side is a thanksgiving and sacrifice given to all His children.

All these saints remind us of the power of Christ's blood and water flowing from His heart, but it is Faustina who most strongly accentuates this particular aspect and associates this with the image of the Merciful Jesus. The blood and water cleanse everyone. When we worship and immerse ourselves in them, we experience the effects of "the source of living water"³⁰, in which God's and man's nature unite. In this extraordinary gift of mercy, which is Christ's blood and water, we find an effective antidote to the forces of darkness present today which remind us of pagan times. St. John Chrysostom, a Doctor of the Church wrote that blood has power against evil spirits. When a follower of Christ is returning from The Lord's table, he will flee from an evil spirit quicker than the wind "as someone who has seen a fire-breathing lion. When you show him a bloody tongue, he will not be able to stop when you give him his reddened mouth like a wretched beast".³¹

Here we have a picture of strength which guarantees man grace, eliminates evil, danger and fear. It pours out hope that will save him from eternal damnation in the depths of devilish hatred.

His passion and descent into Hell, as well as the Resurrection and Ascension of our Savior, the only begotten Son of God, as happened when the Son of God was in the world [...]. As soon as the heavens closed, I heard a voice calling out from heaven: "Eat and drink the flesh and blood of my Son to wipe out Eve's disobedience until you are renewed in a just inheritance". Hildegarda von Bingen, *Scivias. Conoce los caminos*, Madrid 1999, p. 189–190.

³⁰ St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogues...*, p. 98–99.

³¹ Ibid, p. 56.

3. The gift of received wisdom

St. Faustina's life confirms that she was granted the gift of received wisdom. It comes not only from the sacraments of baptism and confirmation but also because she was chosen to be an Apostle and Secretary of Divine Mercy. She confirms this in her *Diary*. Faustina argues that her wisdom it is not acquired or learnt but is a gift from God: I received a deep inner light which gave me to understand, in spirit, all the workings of mercy. It was like a flash of lightning, but more distinct than if I had watched it for hours with the eyes of my body".³² Therefore as Fr. Sopoćko writes – "She talked about theological matters even ones as difficult as the mystery of the Holy Trinity or the mercy of God and other divine qualities with the knowledge of the consummate theologian".³³

It is amazing to think that St. Faustina, who was not an expert in theology, was able to express these truths in colloquial language for all to understand. Her *Diary* proves this: I knew, more distinctly, than ever before, the Three divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But their being, their equality, and their majesty are one. My soul is in communion with these Three; but I do not know how to express this in words; yet, my soul understands it well. Whoever is united to One of the Three Persons is thereby united to the whole Blessed Trinity, for this Oneness is indivisible. This vision, or rather, this knowledge filled my soul with unimaginable happiness, because God is so great".³⁴

³² Diary 1658.

³³ M. Sopoćko, *Proces*, p. 92. The mystery of the Trinity which penetrates into the inner life of God is the hardest to understand even for theologians. They explain it with long and difficult rhetoric and with difficult language (Augustine of Hippo, Yves Congar, Matthias Scheeben, Jürgen Moltmann, Hans Urs von Balthasar). For the faithful who have not studied theology it is very difficult to understand.

³⁴ Diary, 472

In this way, St. Faustina counts among such theologians as Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena and Therese of the Child Jesus. Thanks to the wisdom she had from God, her knowledge was not academic or speculative but as Richard of Saint Victor says – earned through love and surrender to the work of God's grace. This wisdom was independent of any church office or even ordination. Her charism came from the Holy Spirit, the true Doctor of the Church and Teacher for all who imitate Christ. Through Him, she experienced a vision of the merciful Jesus in order to evaluate our earthly reality and direct it to our heavenly one. In the words of St. John of the Cross it could be said that her contemplation poured out though the cleansing and enlightening of souls prepared her for a loving union with God.³⁵

Professor Ignacy Różycki wrote that her theological and mystical wealth is neither shallow nor naive: "She is a magnificent mystic"³⁶. His work *Iudicium alterius theologi censoris super scriptis eidem Servae Dei tributis*³⁷, written at the request of Karol Wojtyła, was published by the Congregation for the Saints in 1980. It was proof of the authenticity of Sister Faustina's revelations and their wisdom. Różycki published a shortened version of these issues in a brochure entitled *The Mercy of God. Guide to the devotion of Divine Mercy*, in which he shows that the essence of this devotion is trust in God and mercy towards our neighbor.

³⁵ C.f. St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul* II, 5, 1,

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ C.f. I. Różycki, *Iudicium alterius theologi censoris super scriptis eidem Servae Dei tributis*, w: *Sacra Congregatio pro Causis Sanctorum, Cracovien. Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servae Dei Faustinae Kowalska Instituti Sororum B. M. V. a Misericordia (1905–1938)*, Rome 1980, p. 65–550.

4. The Uniqueness of the Diary

Ludmila Grygiel observes that the *Diary*, with its amazingly rich content and language, was written by a nun not considered to be a young lady “from a good home” nor an educated person but “a simple girl”. Yet it contains beautiful prose, which includes ornate dialectical elements, lyricism and precise formulations. In addition, the accuracy and realism describing the most intimate mystical experiences is amazing as well as a poetic sensitivity to beauty.³⁸ The *Diary* has been translated into many languages.

How does it differ from the works of other female Doctors of the Church? The works of Hildegard *Liber vitae meritorum* (*The Book of Life's Merits*) and *Liber divinorum operum* (*The Book of Divine Works*) include numerous visions which emphasize man's relationship with God. In her work *Scivias*, the mystic from Bingen describes the work of salvation from the creation of the world to the end of days. Her works are among the most original theological documents of the Middle Ages. The cosmic vision of salvation she presents has no equal in the history of Christian thinking. Hildegard was gifted as an artist but also dealt with medicine, the natural sciences and music.

The *Diary* includes words dictated to by the Lord as well as personal reflections. It seems that, to a greater extent than those of the German Benedictine, they are part of the theology of “the signs of the times” especially in the context of Communism and Nazism.

Catherine of Siena's texts, who used language with ease and expressed the most important theological truths, are sometimes shocking in her use of blunt expressions and naturalistic descriptions which result from her fiery temperament. Faustina is more precise and restrained. However, a deep Christocentrism connects the two

³⁸ L. Grygiel, *Zawierzyć Bożemu Miłosierdziu. Mistyka Siostry Faustyny*, Kraków 2000, p. 18.

mystics. Both women were deeply in love with Christ and led others to Him because He is the source of wisdom and happiness for all people. They uncover in Him both their sense of being a child and that of their great dignity.

The *Diary* also differs from St. Teresa of Avila's *Interior Castle*. The Polish mystic describes her journey to the heights of holiness chronologically, emphasizing above all the Lord's words about mercy, His guidance and the graces granted her. She was taught how to live in practice.

St. Therese of the Child Jesus's work *The Story of a Soul*, appears to be the closest to that of Faustina. The work is not written in systematic way but describes experiences whose principal theme is spiritual childhood, deeply rooted in the love for an earthly father and transferred to our Father in heaven. Hans Urs von Balthasar says that she cuts across all falsehood and pettiness to the real naked truth of the Gospel.³⁹ Faustina acts in a similar way.

The saint from Cracow confirms that behind the vocation she was given to fulfill, there is a radical life according to the Gospel and faithful service to the Church. All her work was subject to the encouragement of all believers. Even though the printed version of the *Diary* did not appear until twenty nine years after her death, it has not lost any of its meaning. It confirms the wisdom of God and the fact that His will is often accompanied by suffering which, when well received, brings many graces. Sister Faustina's *Diary* is a spiritual work to be read by all and not just by the "Secretary" of Divine Mercy.⁴⁰

5. The pastoral use of the Diary

All the female Doctors of the Church lived in difficult times. Political tensions, wars, persecution of the Church and other external

³⁹ C.f. B. McGinn, *Doktorzy Kościoła...*

⁴⁰ C.f. *Diary* 1605.

and internal threats required bravery, realism and the ability to recognize the signs of the times". Sister Faustina did not lack any of the qualities. Through her personal experience, she was gifted to carry out a supernatural task. She had an exceptional submissiveness to the workings of the Holy Spirit; she did everything to strengthen the internal and external work of the Church.

Her message came during an era of Communism and National Socialism, which resulted in the most terrible slaughter and mass murder on an unprecedented scale. Such atrocities were unknown in both the Middle Ages and in modern times.

Was Faustina's attitude to the problems of the Church different from that of the other mystic saints who were Doctors of the Church? Faustina did not travel across Europe as Hildegard, in order to preach, admonish the clergy, encourage life according to one's vocation – she even rebuked Caesar and reminded him that he was subject to God's law. Neither did she participate in the great political missions or apostolic activity of St. Catherine, who helped organize the Crusades and sent letters to kings, princes, condotters and popes. As a result of which the pope was released from his imprisonment in Avignon. Unlike Teresa of Avila, the Polish mystic did not found new religious communities. These two mystics are connected by the theme of expiation. St. Teresa offered reparation for the sin of Luther's division of the Church and the profanation of churches and monasteries because of the Reformation. Faustina asked The Creator for forgiveness for man's evil especially when she received information about the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.

On what is Faustina's concern for the Church and mankind based? First of all, she believed the word of the Lord and secretly wrote down her mystic experiences on the advice of her spiritual advisors (Father Michał Sopocko and Brother Józef Andrasz SJ) In this, St. Therese of the Child Jesus is closest to her. The *Diary*

tells us that they were linked by a spiritual kinship⁴¹. The French mystic dreamt of going to the missions but was very happy when she came to understand that being a missionary meant offering up prayers and good deeds for the success of the missionaries. She was a perfect example of prayer and suffering even though she spent ten years of her life in one convent. Faustina acted in a similar way recognizing that her life's task was to cling to the cross, suffer pain and make sacrifices for the salvation of souls.

Compared to her predecessors, Faustina's achievements may seem small but if one considers the spiritual fruits, which appeared after her death, then it is obvious that the Divine Mercy cult has spread through the whole world. This uneducated woman renewed the life of many human hearts because she was open to the light from above. Through her intimacy with the Holy Spirit she was able to show how to enter into a special relationship with a community known as the Mystical Body Of Christ. She was willing to counteract Satan's hatred and close the gates of hell.

It is worth mentioning that after Sister Faustina's death The Congregation of Sisters of the Merciful Jesus was formed⁴²: Christ Himself had asked for this. If we add to this other the religious congregations, which were inspired by St. Faustina's spirituality (The Community of Servitude Sisters of Divine Mercy, Brothers of Merciful Jesus 2005), it is very clear that the example of her

⁴¹ When Faustina experienced a purification of her senses and spirit, she decided to call upon the help of St. Therese and to say her novena: "On the fifth day of the novena, I dreamed of Saint Therese, but it was as if she were still living on earth. She hid from me the fact that she was a saint and began to comfort me, saying that I should not be worried about this matter, but should trust more in God. [Diary 150]. And she added "It was a dream but (...) three days later the difficulty was solved very easily, just as she had said". Ibid.

⁴² "God demands that there be a congregation which will proclaim the mercy of God to the world and by its prayers, obtain it for the world" [Diary, 436].

life inspired and enriched others. Neither Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, Therese of the Child Jesus, nor Hildegard left such a legacy.

The involvement of the laity in work of mercy is impressive. Perseverance in endeavors, faithfulness, the need to establish the feast of Divine Mercy and the cult of St. Faustina, – all these contributed to reviving the dogma of the Trinity, strengthened the role of this cult in the everyday life of the Church, the development of ecumenism and had an influence on peace and unity. The ‘grassroots’ cult of Divine Mercy, which revived after notification from the Vatican forbidding the spreading of the cult of Divine Mercy as advised by St. Faustina was confirmed in compliance with the call *vox populi, vox Ecclesiae*.⁴³ One of these very active lay groups is known as The Association of Divine Mercy Apostles “Faustinum”. Faustina foretold this before her death.

6. Prophetess

In the *Diary*, Sister Faustina records the words of Jesus: “In the Old Covenant I sent prophets wielding thunderbolts to My People. Today I am sending you with My mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to My Merciful Heart. I use punishment when they themselves force Me to do so; My hand is reluctant to take hold of the sword of justice. Before the Day of Justice I am sending the Day of Mercy.”⁴⁴ St. Faustina’s devotion has been totally accepted by the Church and is developing with unprecedented vitality. The laity worship Divine Mercy as it brings them hope against evil, suffering and despair. The call upon God and worship Him.

⁴³ L. Grygiel, *Zawierzyć Bożemu Miłosierdziu. Mistyka Siostry Faustyny*, Kraków 2000, s. 18.

⁴⁴ *Diary*, 1588.

In this same spirit, John Paul II emphasized that the truth about Divine Mercy is prophetic, filled with power and the Holy Spirit confirmed by the personal testimony of St. Faustina's life. In his homily in the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy in Łagiewniki during the consecration of the basilica in 2002 he added prophetically: *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him (J 4, 23). (...) It is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth, who guides us along the ways of Divine Mercy. (...) he also makes known the fullness of salvation in Christ"*.⁴⁵

Faith, which hastens trust in God's Mercy gives hope and designates a perspective for all those who trust in Him⁴⁶. It is like a "flame for the third millennium."⁴⁷ During his last pilgrimage to Poland John Paul II said: "the message of God's merciful love, proclaimed here through Saint Faustina, *may be made known to all the peoples of the earth* and fill their hearts with hope... May the binding promise of the Lord Jesus be fulfilled: from here there must go forth "the spark which will prepare the world for his final coming" This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world".⁴⁸

God entrusted the task of saving the world to Sister Faustina, choosing her from a nation which had suffered so greatly throughout history. He lifted her out of peasant background which experienced particular hardships. She came from Łeczyca where the

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Homily of the dedication of the Shrine of Divine Mercy* Kraków-Łagiewniki, 17 VIII 2002 Vatican 2002, nr. 4.

⁴⁶ Dives in Misericordia 15.

⁴⁷ L. Knabit, *Fajerwerk na trzecie tysiąclecie*, w: *Fajerwerk na trzecie tysiąclecie. O Bożym miłosierdziu, Ojcu Świętym i świętej Faustynie rozmawia Alina Petrowa-Wasilewicz*, Kraków 2003, s. 228.

⁴⁸ John Paul II, *Homily of the Dedication of the Shrine of Divien Mercy*, Vatican 2002 nr. 5.

Polish hierarchy had publicly declared their opposition against the mistreatment of the peasants (serfs) in the 15th century.

We also know that she also conveyed prophetic words to Father Michał Sopocko, who also became a great devotee of Divine Mercy. Before her death, her advice to him was fulfilled: "I must unceasingly spread the cult of Divine Mercy, and in particular endeavor to establish a feast on the first Sunday after Easter. I can never say I have done enough. Even if I were to encounter the greatest difficulties, even if it seemed that God Himself did not want this, I cannot give up"⁴⁹.

His life was a constant confirmation of these words. When he was forbidden from passing on these revelations, he calmly accepted this restriction but continued with his research on the mystery of mercy. He prayed and believed that the different forms of devotion to Divine Mercy proposed by Sister Faustina would in fact become accepted by the Church in the future⁵⁰. And so they were.

Faustina's life confirmed that she truly was a prophetess. Contributing to the history of salvation, the author of the Diary discovers the mysteries of the human soul, of which her great predecessors were unaware. The exclamation "Jesus, I Trust in You"! carries within it all the most important spiritual qualities of Christianity. There is no salvation without the Lord's mercy. There is no life without the Lord's mercy. All else is pride which throws man into Satan's embrace and does not even respect his free will. Faustina showed that Divine Mercy saves man from the worst oppressions. It saves mankind from destruction and gives meaning

⁴⁹ J. Grzegorzcyk, *Każda dusza to inny świat*, Poznań 1998, p. 101.

⁵⁰ On August 28th 1965 he was received at an audience by Archbishop Wojtyła. During the conversation with the Cracovian Archbishop regarding the beatification of Sister Faustina he heard the words: "This is my first cause, maybe we will start this year". A. Boniecki, *Kalendarium życia Karola Wojtyły*, Kraków 1983, p. 239 In this same year he opened the cause for beatification.

to the universe. Her message reminds man of his primary duties toward the Creator, raises him above his natural smallness, teaches that the meek and humble ensure the continuity of the world because they possess the key to the kingdom of heaven.

7. Saint and mystic

St. Faustina could be called a renewer of the Church. Her mysticism and the actions in her life are inseparable. She skillfully combines *actio* and *contemplatio*. The personification of her work is the example of Mary and Martha in the Gospels. Both are needed because they confirm the reality of life. They renew the Church through spiritual growth and through dutifully fulfilling the obligation to prayer and penance for the evil, which has arisen. In this respect she is close to Hildegard who opposed the pogroms of the Cathars and demanded radical reforms in the Church. She argued that they wanted to change the very nature of the Church but they forgot that true reform comes from a spirit of penance and conversion.

St. Catherine also spoke out in a spirit of renewal. She said of the clergy – “It is essential – she would say – to root out from the garden of the Church the rotten plants and to put in their place “new plants” which are fresh and fragrant”⁵¹. In this respect she was close to St. Teresa of Avila, who was called by God at a time when there was religious dissent in the Church heightened by the decision: *cuius regio, eius et religio*. Teresa started the reform of Carmel. This was a response to God’s demand for a renewal of the Church and Christian life.

⁵¹ John Paul II, *Apostolic motu proprio* announcing St. Bridget of Sweden, St. Catherine of Siena and St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross Co-patronesses of Europe 1 X 1999 Vatican 1999, nr. 7.

All these saints were renewers of the Church. God gave them both gifts and suffering. Prayer was a fundamental to their spiritual life. It united them to God and influenced the Church. The reforms in the Church took place as envisaged by St. John of Avila [died 1569]: All those who seek to reform others must start by reforming themselves. Otherwise, no one will believe until they see the changes in their own lives first.”⁵²

Sister Faustina has enriched the tradition of Christian mysticism, concentrating on the reality of Divine Mercy, which is the focus of her *Diary*. Ludmila Grygiel has noted that she is like “The Polish Catherine of Siena and little St. Therese at once”⁵³. No Polish saint was endowed with so many extraordinary gifts. She was no stranger to the stigmata or the crown of thorns⁵⁴, though they were not visible on the exterior. The fact that they were hidden from human sight was a joy to her because she could be more like Jesus and work for the salvation of others. The Savior comforted and instructed her, “Know my daughter, that your silent daily martyrdom, in complete surrender to my will, brings many souls to heaven, when you think that suffering passes through your strength, see in my wounds, and you will rise above contempt. And human courts.”⁵⁵ Her self-immolation for the sake of others motivated her apostolic efforts. Suffering and mystery went hand in hand, revealing the power of the Lord’s mercy.

⁵² S. Gryga, *Złoty wiek mistyki hiszpańskiej*, t. II, Kraków 1996, p. 26.

⁵³ L. Grygiel, *Zawierzyć...*, p. 8.

⁵⁴ She received the stigmata on 30th April, 1928. “During prayer, I saw a great brilliance and issuing from the brilliance, rays which completely enveloped me. Then suddenly, I felt a terrible pain in my hands, my feet and my side and the thorns of the crown of thorns”. (Diary 759). These sufferings were present for some time during the Eucharist and every Friday. Then there was a break until September 1936. Then they were repeated every Friday and upon meeting any soul who was not in a state of grace. [Ibid].

⁵⁵ Diary 1184.

It is worth mentioning that the canonization of Saint Faustina (April 30, 2000)⁵⁶, was the first one in the jubilee year of the third millennium of Christianity and so has a “special significance”⁵⁷. During this ceremony, the Pope reminded us: “I pass it on to all people, so that they will learn to know ever better the true face of God and the true face of their brethren”.⁵⁸ In this way, he made Faustina an intercessor, model and champion of everyday life according to the Gospels as well as a credible witness to Merciful Love. What she once wrote came true: “I am striving for sanctity, because in this way I shall be useful for the Church”.⁵⁹

It is impossible to count the immeasurable works of grace, which have taken place in human hearts thanks to St. Faustina’s holiness and message. They require us to adore the secretive work of a merciful God, which can save the world.

In the constitution *Gaudium et spes*, the Fathers of the Council wrote that “We can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping”.⁶⁰ Love – which is also Mercy – will tirelessly work in order to make this human world of ours more humane”.⁶¹ Sister Faustina’s message echoes this statement.

⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Homily during the Canonization Mass of Sr. Faustina Kowalska*, 30 IV 2000, Vatican 2000.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Diary, [1505].

⁶⁰ CC 31.

⁶¹ A. Frossard, *Rozmowy z Janem Pawłem*, tłum. A. Turowiczowa, Vaticano 1982, p. 232.

Paweł Warchoń OFMConv

God's Mercy in papal teachings and ministry

We can assert without a shadow of a doubt that John Paul II greatly contributed to propagating the cult of Divine Mercy in the ways Sister Faustina proposed.¹ Speaking still as a cardinal on the 50th anniversary of the death of Brother Albert Chmielowski about the message granted by God at the turn of the century, he said: Mercy and Christianity are the great issues of our day. If there was no mercy, there would be no Christianity. They are one and the same.² Mercy is the main theme of his encyclicals and statements. It “shapes his pontificate”³ and is the “key” to interpreting Sister Faustina Kowalska’s visions. Pope Benedict XVI referred to mercy and Pope Francis also teaches on this subject.

¹ C.f. P. Warchoń, *Miłosierny Bóg i miłosierny człowiek. Teologiczna interpretacja miłosierdzia w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, Wrocław 2007.

² C.f. K. Wojtyła, *Chrześcijaństwo jest niemożliwe bez miłosierdzia*. Homily in occasion of the 50th anniversary of the death of Br. Albert Chmielowski, in: *Liturgia godzin*, Poznań 1987.

³ John Paul II, *Address in Basilica of Divien Mercy* Kraków-Łagiewniki, 7 VI 1997, Vatican 1997.

1. The most important form of mercy

St. Faustina's message and the question of mercy had an influence on the life and work of Karol Wojtyła as a priest⁴ and a bishop⁵. They were the fruits of his pastoral experience in Poland and especially in Cracow⁶. George Weigel makes it known that John Paul II confessed he felt "very close"⁷ to Sister Faustina. He often prayed by her tomb in the Divine Mercy chapel in Lagiewniki even during the German occupation.

It is not therefore surprising, that he approved the different forms of this cult at the beginning of his pontificate. He presented his Encyclical *Dives in misericordia* on 30th November 1980, which was a synthesis of his teaching "the sum of mercy"⁸, "a great document for civilization"⁹. In his encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, he indicated that Divine Mercy shapes human thinking and strength of spirit; it helps man discover his own dignity and recognize the

⁴ Chronicles of the Order note that Wojtyła took part in devotional services to Divine Mercy in the 1940s. C.f. E. Siepak, *Zdejmij sandały z nóg, w: Fajerwerk na trzecie tysiąclecie. O Bożym miłosierdziu, Ojcu Świętym i świętej Faustynie rozmawia Alina Petrowa-Wasilewicz*, Kraków 2003, p. 12.

⁵ In the 1960's, when the girls' educational institution was taken away from the Sister Wojtyła sought to take care of people in need of spiritual and material support. In the newly formed nursery school the sisters kept in contact with the youth. At that time there was a notification prohibiting of promulgating of Divine Mercy in the form handed down by Sister Faustina. It was issued by the Holy See in 1959.

⁶ C.f. John Paul II, *Memory and Identity* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 2005.

⁷ C.f. G. Weigel, *Witness to Hope* Harper Collins, New York 1999.

⁸ C.f. A. Gajda, *Miłosierdzie większe niż sprawiedliwość. Piękno myśli i słowa w encyklice "Dives in misericordia"*, ZN KUL 3 (2004), p. 85–101.

⁹ J. Ziółkowski, *Chrześcijaństwo cywilizacją miłości, Miłość miłosierna*, (red.) J. Krucina, Wrocław 1995, s. 43.

face of God. He was to develop this theme in his teaching and work. He always argued that God is the hope of the Church, man and culture. The message of Divine Mercy is clearly the voice of the Holy Spirit that brings the revelation of God closer to us. On November 22nd 1981, in the Shrine of Merciful Love in Collevalenza in Italy, the pope entrusted his pastoral service to the merciful God.¹⁰ On May 13th 1982, exactly a year after the attempt on his life in St. Peter's Square, during his pilgrimage to Portugal, he thanked Our Lady of Fatima for the great sign of mercy, which was to save his life. Moreover, he established the second Sunday of Easter as the Feast of Divine Mercy during which a plenary indulgence could be granted, he recognized the cult of the 'image of the Merciful Jesus', approved The Chaplet of Divine Mercy, The Hour of Mercy and entrusted the world to Divine Mercy. In 2002, he consecrated the Basilica of Divine Mercy in Cracow-Lagiewniki, built in the place where St. Faustina spent the last years of her life and where she is buried.

John Paul II's message of God's mercy is prophetic because it is full of power and Spirit and confirmed by the personal testimony of life. During the consecration of the Basilica of Divine Mercy in Cracow-Łagiewniki, he said: "the message of God's merciful love, proclaimed here through Saint Faustina, *may be made known to all the peoples of the earth* and fill their hearts with hope... May the binding promise of the Lord Jesus be fulfilled: from here there must go forth "the spark which will prepare the world for his final coming" This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world".¹¹

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Orędzie miłości miłosiernej – szczególne zadanie mojego pontyfikatu*. Przemówienie podczas modlitwy Anioł Pański, Collevalenza, 22 XI 1981, OR 11 (1981), s. 20.

¹¹ John Paul II, *Homily of the Dedication of the Shrine of Divine Mercy*, Vatican 2002 nr. 5.

George Weigel writes that “the Divine Mercy devotion outlined by Saint Faustyna Kowalska became, during the pontificate of John Paul II, a means for the recovery of devotional life in Catholic parishes throughout the world suggested that John Paul II’s pastoral intuitions about the imperative of the Church’s preaching God’s mercy at the turn into a new millennium were squarely on target.”¹² This expert on the thought of John Paul II makes clear that this statement is in line with his resolutions. The author emphasizes that mercy is not only John Paul II’s favorite metaphor but his ability to read the signs of the times.

Inspired by St. Faustina’s visions, her spiritual director Fr. Michał Sopoćko¹³ and Fr. Ignacy Różycki, the pope reminds the world of God’s mercy. It was thanks to his efforts that one can speak of a renaissance of the cult of Divine Mercy. This did not happen immediately. The reason was an incorrect translation of the Diary into Italian, because of which Faustina was charged with allegations of heterodoxy.¹⁴ However, the Archbishop of Cracow stood in her

¹² G. Weigel, *The End and The Beginning*, Random House, New York 2010, p. 438.

¹³ C.f. M. Sopoćko, *Duch liturgii II Niedzieli Wielkanocy*, “Bo Jego miłosierdzie na wieki” (Ps 135), (red.) T. Bielski, “Powołanie człowieka” 2 (1972), Poznań 1972, s. 377–392; S. Strzelecki, *Wkład księdza Michała Sopoćki w formację duchowieństwa*, Białystok 1983; M. Paszkiewicz, *Ksiądz Michał Sopoćko 1888–1875*, Białystok 1987; H. Ciereszko, *Droga świętości księdza Michała Sopoćki*, Kraków 2002; tenże, *Ksiądz Michał Sopoćko Apostoł Miłosierdzia Bożego*, Kraków 2004; tenże, *Życie i działalność księdza Michała Sopoćki (1888–1975). Pełna biografia Apostoła Miłosierdzia Bożego*, Kraków 2006.

¹⁴ *Si rende noto che la Suprema Sacra Congregazione dell’Sant’Offizio, prese In esame le asserite visioni e rivelazioni di Suor Faustina Kowalska, dell’Istituto di Nostra Signora della Misericordia, defunta nel 1938 presso Cracovia, ha stabilito (...) doversi proibire la diffusione delle immagini e degli scritti che presentano la devozione della Divina Misericordia nelle forme proposte dalla medesima Suor Faustina, (...). Dal Palazzo del S. Offizio, 6 III 1959 roku. Ugo O’Flaherty, Notaro. C.f. Suprema Sacra Congregatio S. Officii, *Notificazione*, AAS 51 (1959), s. 271. As rightly noted by the Congregation of the Holy Office, the quoted statement – signed by a notary – does*

defense and supported the cause of her beatification.¹⁵ Thanks to him, it was decided to thoroughly investigate the Diary. Cardinal Wojtyła turned to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1977, asking whether it was possible to revise the 1959 Notification. As early as April 15, 1978, he received a reply from the Vatican saying that the Notification Orders were no longer valid. Eventually, the Congregation withdrew the objections and doubts raised earlier in

not coincide fully with the content of the warning sent by this Congregation to the bishops, senior superiors of 19 November 1958. In this warning it is stated that: 1) *Constat reveletiones Sororis Faustinae Kowalska indolem supernaturalem prae se non ferre*; 2) *nullum festum Divinae Misericordiae instituendum est*. Thus, there is a certain hesitation on the part of the Congregation of the Holy Office regarding the limits of the proper worship of Divine Mercy. C.f. L. Balter, *Wstęp*, BJMW, p. 6.

¹⁵ Before returning from the third session of the Second Vatican Council, Wojtyła spoke with Cardinal Ottaviani, Prefect of the Congregation of the Holy Office, about whether the Notification excluded the process of beatification of Sister Faustina. As a result of this conversation, Archbishop Wojtyła addressed the Superior of the Daughters of Charity: "Not only was I allowed, but I was ordered to begin the process [of Sister Faustina], and as soon as there are still living witnesses". He added: "If we had started immediately with the beatification of Sister Faustina, then today things would look different. They started with the spread of worship of new forms that some unknown nun was given and so it was stopped". The superior ordered that the Diary be made available, even to the priests; To compose a prayer for the beatification and ask for an *imprimatur*, but nowhere to cite any excerpts from the Diary even in prayer, leaflets or pictures. Later, when he could not take up the matter, Wojtyła handed it over to the fourth session of the Second Vatican Council. He gave it to Bishop Julian Groblicki, who started the process of information gathering. Fr. Józef Szczotkowski was the president of the tribunal examining the life of Sister Faustina. A total of 75 court sessions took place, 45 witnesses were heard, letters were collected, and no public worship was held. All the documents were submitted to the Prescribing Assembly. The work lasted until October 1967. In the same year the official closing of the diocesan process took place in the archbishop's chapel in Cracow, during which Cardinal Wojtyła celebrated Holy Mass and signed the proceedings and then joined the prayers at the tomb of Sister Faustina.

relation to the Diary. The repeal of the Notification aroused interest in the devotion to Divine Mercy in Poland and around the world.

Saint Faustina's visions inspired many prominent theologians. Among the participants of the symposia devoted to the topic of mercy, whose direct organizer was Fr. Prof. Lucjan Balter [† 2010], the theological contribution of Fr. Michał Sopoćko and Fr. Prof. Vincent Granat [† 1979], who analyzes the issue of mercy and are directly or indirectly, precursors who prepare the pastoral and intellectual ground for John Paul II. Sopoćko especially emphasized the richness of the future saint's thought. His spiritual similarity with John Paul II was evident. The Pope synthesized the theology of mercy with reference to the parable of the prodigal son. In this way he highlighted wasted sonship and lost dignity, a tragedy which is continually repeated by man, but which the response of the forgiving Father who is "rich in mercy" also remains unchanged. *Dives in misericordia* along with *Redemptor hominis* are the theological documents of John Paul II which reflect the dimensions of spiritual life, or fatherhood in pastoral care and being children of God.

2. The Diary – Gospel of Mercy

John Paul II called St. Faustina's Diary "a particular Gospel of Divine Mercy, written from a twentieth-century perspective".¹⁶ In this way he emphasized the importance of this document and showed mercy as an important spiritual experience for people of this age and the next. We know that the issue of mercy is strongly emphasized in the Gospel of Luke, while the parable of the prodigal son and merciful Samaritan are the key to understanding the Father's love and mercy as well as the attitude that man ought to have towards the poor and suffering. They touch every human

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Memory...*, p. 60.

being. Therefore, the mercy of God revealed in the Father's love, despite some claims that it grew out of the personal experience of the Pope's Cracow, goes far beyond Cracow and Poland.

George Weigel writes that "to proclaim the compassion of the Father who welcomes home his prodigal children and restores to them the dignity they have squandered was to meet a universal human need, after a century in which humanity had turned creations upon itself and turned the world into a slaughterhouse in the process".¹⁷

John Paul II believed it was the Church's prophetic mission to adore God's mercy and to proclaim mercy as this was the way to the future. Mercy was a spark that could ignite hope and unleash the power needed to undertake pastoral ministry. This is a timeless message for today's world which suffering from spiritual hunger. As Salij puts it: this is "the direction in which the Church all over the world should go".¹⁸

The cult of Divine Mercy as proposed by Sister Faustina and proclaimed by John Paul II is the "DNA" of the Church's mission. The pope made *the* pastoral program for the third millennium as well as a priority of his own ministry. The papal motto "be not afraid" corresponds with the message found in the *Diary*. It teaches that God's healing power and His tireless care for man's fate is given to whoever trusts Him. Divine Mercy fills every believer with optimism because it shows the compassion of a Father who accepts his prodigal children, restores the dignity they have squandered by making a slaughterhouse of the world.¹⁹

The cult of Divine Mercy initiated by Sister Faustina is becoming more popular in the modern world and thanks to their simplicity, the different forms of devotion are known and practiced

¹⁷ G. Weigel, *The End and The Beginning...*, p. 438.

¹⁸ J. Salij, *Wiadomości*, „Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna” 34 (2002), p. 6.

¹⁹ G. Weigel, *The End and The Beginning...*, p. 438.

all over the world. The Image of the Merciful Jesus hangs in many churches, the Chaplet to Divine Mercy is recited even in African dialects. The hour of Mercy is observed in many counties and the Feast of Divine Mercy is also celebrated. The Divine Mercy Movement has been established and includes various communities, associations, fraternities, apostolates and individuals who have taken up its mission. It takes the message of mercy to the world through personal witness, acts of mercy, words and prayer. Many churches in Poland and throughout the world are now consecrated to Divine Mercy, the Merciful Jesus, St. Sister Faustina or St. John Paul II. New shrines of Divine Mercy in which the truth of God's merciful love is proclaimed have also been built. Certainly Providence shows the world through Sister Faustina and John Paul II, the true source of the Church's fecundity and salvation for mankind. The words in the Diary convince us of the truth, that "mankind will not have peace until it turns to the Fount of My Mercy"²⁰ In Cracow-Łagiewniki, the pope entrusted the whole of humanity to God:

God, merciful Father, in your Son, Jesus Christ, you have revealed your love and poured it out upon us in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. We entrust to you today the destiny of the world and of every man and woman. Bend down to us sinners, heal our weakness, conquer all evil, and grant that all the peoples of the earth may experience your mercy. In You, the Triune God, may they ever find the source of hope. Eternal Father, by the Passion and Resurrection of your Son, have mercy on us and upon the whole world!²¹

It is worth noting that the pope used words taken from the Chaplet of Divine Mercy as Sister Faustina suggested.²²

²⁰ Diary [699].

²¹ John Paul II, *Homily of the Dedication of the Shrine of Divine Mercy*, Vatican 2002 nr. 6.

²² C.f. Diary [476].

3. Entrustment

John Paul II regarded trust as an important dimension of mercy. He held this view throughout his whole life: during the war when he prayed in the chapel of the Sisters of Divine Mercy, through his trust from the very beginning of his pontificate in Collevaleza in Italy and finally by entrusting the whole world to Divine Mercy in the Shrine in Cracow. The way the pope experienced mercy, convinced millions of people. The beginning of a springtime²³ in the Church – referred to by the pope in his encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, starts to blossom in the third millennium. He refers to the parable of the seed sown in the ground (c.f. Mt 13: 1-23) and to the cross of Christ and he teaches us that in darkness there is light, in death there is life, in sadness and uncertainty – hope. St. Therese of the Child Jesus' "Little Way" in the teaching of John Paul II becomes the "Great Way". The joyful trust expressed by Faustina and upheld by John Paul, is what every person needs in times of joy and sorrow; in moments of enthusiasm and discouragement²⁴. Only then will Christ, our master, sanctify our lowliness²⁵.

This is the source of the pope's optimism. From this stems his strong conviction that every unhappy soul will find solace in the Lord's mercy. Therefore the pope is able to say '*Non abbiate paura*'... – Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. (...). Do not be afraid. Christ knows "what is in man"²⁶. Moreover "Do not be afraid

²³ RM 86.

²⁴ During a catechesis on his visit to Poland in 2002 the Pope would say: "How many times I also, as a worker and student, and then as a priest and a bishop, in difficult times of Polish history, repeated this simple and profound call and experienced its effectiveness and power". Cf. John Paul II, *Myślą obejmowałem...*, p. 4.

²⁵ Cf. J. Tischner, *Miłość nas rozumie*, Kraków 2005, s. 172.

²⁶ John Paul II, Homily for the Inauguration of his Pontificate, 22 X 1978, Vatican 1978, nr. 5.

of man's weakness or his grandeur! Man does not cease to be great, not even in his weakness".²⁷ These are the words of "a witness to hope"²⁸ who proclaims that God is close to every human being, even though in *Ecclesia in Europe*, Jerzy Szymik observes that he writes about "a dying hope".²⁹

George Weigel believes that this attitude of the pope changed the course of history and highlighted the most important aspects of his era. His trust in the Lord's mercy creates courage, revives awareness and leads the world towards goodness and peace. Without losing faith in man, he upholds the belief that he can know the truth about God and so can live accordingly. His life confirms the words of the council fathers' – "We can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping".³⁰ "Love – which is also Mercy – will work tirelessly to make that human world more human".³¹ A deep personal encounter with the Heart of Christ removes fear (cf. 1 Jn 4:18), increases his desire for action, facilitates the overcoming of difficulties, and actively loves whatever the cost. Whoever appeals to Divine Mercy and trust in it will always quell his fears and anxieties.³² The power one draws from a faith grounded in Christ is able to conquer all despair.

²⁷ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* Random House: London, 1994 p. 12.

²⁸ John Paul II, *Od praw człowieka...*, p. 9.

²⁹ C.f. J. Szymik, *W światłach...*, s. 179.

³⁰ *Gaudium et spes* 31.

³¹ A. Frossard, *Rozmowy...*, s. 232.

³² Kwestię tę dobrze rozumiał święty Augustyn w *Wyznaniach*, gdy po latach wspomina grzeszny okres swego życia i dziękuje Bogu w żarliwej modlitwie: "Modlitwy mej wysłuchaj, Panie! Niech nie omdleje moja dusza pod brzemieniem Twojej surowości. Niechaj się nigdy nie znużę dziękowaniem Ci za miłosierną opiekę: za to, żeś wyrwał mnie z gęstwiny zła, za to, żeś stał się dla mnie słodszy od wszystkich pokus, jakim dawniej ulegałem – więc pokochałem Ciebie nade wszystko,

The message of Mercy is directed to everyone because contemporary man is in most need of hope. The Pope writes: The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy.³³ Mercy opposes evil in the world, directing us towards “a new heaven” and “a new earth” (2 P 3,13)

4. Saint

It is obvious from John Paul II's attitude as a priest, bishop and pope that it was his ambition to gain souls for God. His apostolic zeal spurred him to travel extensively. He travelled far and wide to bring people the Good News of Jesus the Savior and he initiated “a new Pentecost” in the Church. He was supported by the Holy Spirit, who constantly calls new witnesses of love. His openness to the inspiration of the Spirit was a sign of the times.

The Pope prayed, studied, wrote and fulfilled the mission entrusted to him by God, all the while trusting in Mary's intercession. During the Mass of his beatification, Pope Benedict XVI said the following: “By his witness of faith, love and apostolic courage, accompanied by great human charisma, this exemplary son of Poland helped believers throughout the world not to be afraid to be called Christian, to belong to the Church, to speak of the Gospel. In a word: he helped us not to fear the truth, because truth is the guarantee of liberty. To put it even more succinctly: he gave us the strength to believe in Christ, because Christ is *Redemptor hominis*, the Redeemer of man”.³⁴

całą mocą miłości uchwyciłem się Twojej ręki. O, aż po kres życia chroń mnie od wszelkiego zła”. *Wyznania*, I, 15, tłum. Z. Kubiak, Warszawa 1992, s. 47.

³³ DiM 2.

³⁴ Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Beatification of Pope John Paul II* 1.05.2011, Vatican 2011.

His life convinces us of the fact that holiness is the result of God's grace and not of man's plans. John Paul II wanted to be a saint and so he reminded priests, consecrated persons, mothers and fathers, children and young people about the need for holiness. He wrote: "Holiness is the greatest testimony of the dignity conferred on a disciple of Christ"³⁵. Holiness is a gift to others and the fulfillment of one's humanity that does not primarily think of oneself but of others. Not me and you but You and me! This way of thinking can be applied in every situation. George Weigel in his attempt to describe the pope's personality wrote in order to understand the pope "grasping as much as we can of the person and accomplishment of Karol Wojtyła means beginning from the premise that the outside of Wojtyła's life – the public accomplishment – was the by-product of the inside: his interior life, the life of the human spirit (and, he would say, the work of the Holy Spirit within him). (...) Karol Wojtyła's life was a life of ongoing metanoia".³⁶

It is not surprising that he announced new saints and blessed with such zeal. What prompted him to canonize more saints than throughout all previous centuries? Simply his desire to share the joyful news that holiness is the vocation of all the baptized. This is why he raised people of different nations, states, professions and social groups to the dignity of sainthood – those who already during in their lifetime were able to converse with heaven. He wanted people to bathe in the light of holiness. That was his teaching. That was the teaching he directed to a generation that was in spiritual poverty and, paradoxically, one which was hungry for the Spirit of holiness. He taught them how to drink from the font of Love. Saints, even those from centuries past, are not lifeless statue; they live and share the fire of God's love by kindling it in human souls. He himself desired holiness, therefore, during the Canonization of

³⁵ John Paul II, Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, Vatican 1988 nr. 16.

³⁶ G. Weigel, *End and the Beginning* p. 402–403.

Saint Kinga, on 16th June 1999 he uttered these profound words: "Saints live though saints and they desire sanctity". John Paul II lived in deep relation with the saints. His attitude can be explained through the celebration of All Saints' Day – the day on which he was ordained to the priesthood. He said that this day was always the greatest Feast day for him.

Although for the Pope the revival of the cult of the saints was a way of evangelization, many opposed his numerous beatifications and canonizations. However, the pope was correctly attuned to the Catholic soul, when he drew upon the anthropological principle that the grace of God does not destroy nature but perfects it. He explained that a transcendent calling gives the power to overcome mundane barriers. God does not destroy human individuality; He deepens it. John Paul was proof of this truth. The death of his mother and then his father – contrary to psychological and pedagogical predictions – revealed the power of God who 'brought him up'.

When we do not imitate the saints, it is easy for spiritual chaos to take place. The Pope recalled this truth at a meeting with young people in 2002 in the famous papal window when he said: "You become like those with whom you spend time". Whoever imitates the saints and is friends with them, can be sure of success. The saints are not idle in heaven; they work for our sanctification there. God planned it this way so that we must resort to the help of others to gain what we most need. Thus God recalls the need for a mutual coexistence between the clergy and laity, the educated and uneducated, the young and the old, believers and unbelievers, the wise and the ignorant. This is the essence of love of neighbor. The grace of one depends on the other, because there is only one testimony of suffering and prayer. In this way the saints are our surest friends.

John Paul II was a pope whose teaching would feed millions of souls hungry for words from heaven. Open to the workings of the Holy Spirit, he sought creative ways to help everyone love

Jesus. He wanted everyone to desire God, seek Him and to grow in his humanity. That is why he taught a Christian understanding of freedom and from this desire came his motto: “Do not be afraid!”.

5. Benedict XVI on Divine Mercy

In his homily for the Beatification Mass on Divine Mercy Sunday 2011, Benedict XVI remarked that: “he rightly reclaimed for Christianity that impulse of hope which had in some sense faltered before Marxism and the ideology of progress.”³⁷ This statement about the Pope who experienced Communism and opposed it reminds us of a future which embodies God’s mercy and can satisfy the expectations of the human heart.

The Pope from Germany had great respect for John Paul II, which was evident during his brief pontificate. Just a year after his election, he visited Poland to thank his predecessor for his work for the Church. He visited places related to John Paul II’s ministry, including Cracow-Łagiewniki. He prayed there before the image of the Merciful Jesus and the relics of Sister Faustina. He also met with the sick in the Shrine of Divine Mercy. He then spoke of the mystery of suffering and mercy that are linked to the Cross of Christ.³⁸

The Pope said that like Faustina, John Paul II became an Apostle of Divine Mercy: “His long and multifaceted pontificate finds its center here; his whole mission in the service of the truth about God, man and peace in the world is contained in the message of mercy ... [the Pope] rediscovered the meaning and greatness of God’s mercy”.³⁹

³⁷ Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Beatification of Pope John Paul II* 1.05. 2011 Vatican, 2011.

³⁸ Benedict XVI, *Address in the Shrine of Divine Mercy* 27 V 2006, Vatican 2006.

³⁹ *Człowiek, który żył Bogiem. Rozmowa z Benedyktem XVI z okazji Dnia Papieskiego*, OR, wyd. pol., 11–12 (2005), s. 42.

Following Joseph Ratzinger, we can say that Christianity sees its purpose in the pierced side of the Savior; that is, in the merciful heart of Christ. "The Christian's programme – the programme of the Good Samaritan, the programme of Jesus – is "a heart which sees".⁴⁰

6. Pope Francis

Pope Francis also appreciates the role of John Paul II in spreading the cult of Divine Mercy. He states that: "but the light of divine mercy, which the Lord in a way wished to return to the world through Sr. Faustina's charism, will illumine the way for the men and women of the third millennium".⁴¹ In his many speeches, he proclaims God's mercy, because whoever practices it, "is not afraid of death".⁴² He teaches that followers of Jesus must go out with the Lord to proclaim the Good News.

At the end of the Angelus prayer on November 17, 2013 the Pope said that mercy is a necessary remedy for Christians. He advised those gathered in St. Peter's Square to take a box of *Misericordina* with them, thus encouraging them to recite the Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.⁴³

At the Mass inaugurating his Pontificate, Francis declared that as Pope he wanted embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important, those whom Matthew lists in the final judgment on love: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Deus Caritas est*, 31, b.

⁴¹ Francis I, *Speech to parish priests of Rome* 6 III 2014, Vatican 2014.

⁴² Francis I, *Address during general audience* 27 XI 2013, Vatican 2013.

⁴³ Francis I, *Address during the Angelus*, 17.11.2013, Vatican 2013.

⁴⁴ Francis I, *Homily of for the Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry*, Vatican 2013.

Andrzej A. Napiórkowski OSPPE

God's Mercy: John Paul II's theocentric and anthropocentric vision of the history of salvation

By undertaking an intellectual and faithful reflection on the issue of Divine Mercy regarding salvation one discovers that God exists through love and for love and above all, it deepens one's personal belief that God is a Father, who is rich in mercy¹. Analyzing the history of salvation, I will be guided by the truth around which the whole of my theological thought is based, namely, the *hominization of God and the deification of man*. From the broad perspective of the history of salvation it follows that through His Incarnation, God experienced his humanity through and in the person of Jesus Christ. At the same time, man has the hidden, loving life of the Triune God implanted his human nature.

1. Connotations of the concept of “mercy”

In colloquial Polish ‘*miłosierdzie*’ (mercy), undoubtedly influenced by ecclesiastical Latin *miser cordias*, is synonymous with compassion

¹ A. Napiórkowski, *Kościół dla człowieka. Błogosławionego Jana Pawła Wielkiego mistyka Eklezji*, Kraków 2011, p. 99–109.

and forgiveness. This connotation carries a certain danger with it because it does not convey the richness of the notion of “mercy”, which has a biblical root. The experience of the people of Israel meant that they understood mercy as a combination of compassion and fidelity.²

What is hidden in the concept of “mercy”? Referring to Judeo-Christian revelation, it is necessary to analyze the semantic fields in which the word “mercy” appears and try to grasp its meaning in context. All languages have many synonyms for this word: “compassion”, “graciousness”, “gentleness”, “love”, “forgiveness”, “pity”, “kindness”, “courtesy” and “delicateness”. In the Old Testament, three terms are used to describe God’s mercy: *rahamim*, *hesed* and *hen* (grace). The Hebrew term *rahamim* means the instinctive attachment of one creature to another. The feeling of mercy according to the Semites has its origin in the mother’s womb (cf. 1 Kings 3:26, *rahamim* – plural from *rehem*: mother’s womb). It is a love full of tenderness. Outwardly, it expresses itself in concrete acts of compassion, arising from a tragic situation. The richness of the content is also complemented by symbols, paintings, and the expression of God’s full mercy and love for all creatures, especially for His chosen people; chosen primarily for their nationality and ethnicity (Israel) and later for their faith in Jesus Christ (the new Israel).³

In turn, the term *hesed*, translated from the Greek *eleos*, expresses the idea of love or mutual respect between two faithful beings. Mercy is not just an instinctual reaction of goodness, which may be misleading. It is faithful to one’s own commitments. Modern languages try to express the essence of these Hebrew and Greek terms by means of the words “mercy” or “love”, but also read into

² C.f. J. Cambier, X. Léon-Dufour, *Miłosierdzie*, in: *Słownik teologii biblijnej*, red. X. Léon-Dufour, tłum. i oprac. K. Romaniuk, Poznań 1990, p. 478–479.

³ C.f. *Ibid*, p. 479.

them the meaning of words such as: “sensitivity”, “compassion”, “empathy”, “goodness” and even “grace” (*hen*). The Bible shows us that God is praised in various situations for being sensitive to human misery as a “merciful and gracious” God. (cf. Ps 111: 4; 145, 8-9; 103, 8). The inspired authors shows Him as always ready to help, forgive, and show mercy. The psalmist praises the eternal mercy of God: “I will praise You, my Lord, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forever, For great is your love toward me, you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead” (Ps 86: 12–13).⁴

God as the ‘Father of Mercy’ (C.f. 2 Cor 1:3) has revealed the fullness of his mercy in Jesus Christ. Through His person, deeds and words, and ultimately in his crucifixion and resurrection, mercy has irreversibly and in the fullest possible way been given to the whole of creation. Jesus as the one who reveals the Father and His love, gave the Old Testament concepts and meanings, the depths of His own life. John Paul II observes: “Not only does (Jesus) speak of it and explain it by the use of comparisons and parables, but above all He Himself makes it incarnate and personifies it”.⁵ The Pope further explains: “He Himself, in a certain sense, is mercy. To the person who sees it in Him – and finds it in Him – God becomes “visible” in a particular way as the Father who is rich in mercy”. (Eph 2: 4)⁶

In the *Concordance of the New Testament*, we find two related terms: “mercy” and “merciful”. The next term in alphabetical order is “to love” (*miłować* in Polish). The language of the New Covenant uses the term *agape* (love) for mercy.⁷ That is why often the word “love” often appears in place of “mercy” – especially in St. Paul’s letters.

⁴ C.f. Ibid.

⁵ DiM 2.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ C.f. K. Grela, *Konkordancja Nowego Testamentu*, Kraków 1987, v. 1, p. 355–357.

Paul's *agape* (Greek) can not exactly be equated with mercy. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this" (Romans 5: 8); "If I spoke in tongues ... but do not have love – I am nothing" (1 Cor 13: 1-2); "Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it" (2 Cor 8: 24); "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Gal 5: 6).⁸ Mercy means the love that embraces every prodigal son, every human misery, particularly moral misery and sin.⁹

This merciful love takes on a universal character. In the Old Testament, too, we find fragments which speak of mercy in this universal sense: "The mercy of man – his neighbor, and the mercy of the Lord – over all mankind" (Syr 18:13). The mercy of God the Father is intensified in Jesus as the Incarnate Charity. As the Gospel of Luke points out, Jesus loves the poor, the afflicted and the sick (cf. Lk 4: 18; 7, 22) and He befriends sinners (7:34).¹⁰

2. The Chosen People in the Old Covenant

In the history of the Chosen People, there is a multi-dimensional experience of mercy: in society and community, in individuals and in our interior. First, we need to refer to the description in the Book of Genesis when God, overcome with pity at the macabre situation of our first parents, announces the manifestation of his mercy (cf. Gen 3:15).¹¹ At the same time he begins to prepare and enable his

⁸ C.f. A. Geniusz, *Boże miłosierdzie jako źródło chrześcijańskiego nonkonformizmu* (Rz 12, 1-2[8]), "Verbum Vitae" 2003 nr 3, s. 139–161. C.f. S. P. Carbone, *La misericordia universale di Dio in Rm 11, 30–32*, Bologna 1991.

⁹ C.f. DiM 6.

¹⁰ C.f. J. Cambier, X. Léon-Dufour, *Miłosierdzie*, dz. cyt., p. 482.

¹¹ For the first time mercy gains an ecclesial dimension, because in the Protogospel one can see the idea of the Church existing in God's plan. The first convocation of the people of God took place at the very moment when sin destroyed the unity of man with God and the communion of men among

Chosen People to accept the gift of mercy. Therefore, God reveals The Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, which is both a synthesis of the entire religion and morality of the Old Testament, and a concrete expression of his love. "The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation". (Ex 34: 6-7)

God allows the consequences of sin to last weigh upon future generations. This shows the gravity and tragedy of sin. However, God's mercy also reaches for a thousand generations; meaning He is infinitely patient. Therefore, whenever God ought to punish people for yet another infidelity, He grants mercy as long as the sinner recognizes his wickedness.¹²

Conversion is a special moment, because it allows God to manifest His love, which does not act against human freedom. Moved by pity and in order to hasten the spiritual return of wretched sinners, Yahweh sends his prophets. In this way the history of salvation acquires a very personal character. The prophets invoke the unfaithful both to fidelity to the covenant, and they also intercede to Yahweh for the people. One could risk saying that, on the one hand, God proclaims severe punishment through his prophets (such as Hosea, Jeremiah or Isaiah), and on the other hand, He holds back and urges mercy to be shown: "Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him". (Jer 31: 20; Cf. Is 49: 14, 54; 7).

themselves. The Protogospel is the dawn of the Good News of God's mercy. C.f.A. Napiórkowski, *Geneza, natura i posłanie Kościoła*, w: *Kościół Chrystusowy*, ed. T. Dzidek, Ł. Kamykowski, A. Kubiś, A. A. Napiórkowski, Kraków 2003, p. 74.

¹² C.f. J. Cambier, X. Léon-Dufour, *Miłosierdzie*, p. 480.

The relationship between Man and God is reflected in the relationship between sin and mercy. Man's condition is that of a sinner to whom God responds with love. However, His love is only manifest when man recognizes his own tragedy and shows a willingness to return to unity with the Creator. The story of salvation becomes a joint Divine-human drama of love.¹³ However, love in itself appears "lifeless", that is, the opening up of the lover must be met by the free response of the beloved for it to be "animated".

This interior affectionate response by God to Israel's straying was intended to make unbelievers convert. The people of the covenant often experienced God's mercy and knew that God was rich in mercy. Israel constantly experienced this mercy: in the desert, despite its murmuring and rebellion, and also during Babylonian captivity. Israel knew only too well that God's mercy far surpassed human mercy. God is not only just with the sinner, but acts with love: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, angry and very gentle. You do not know the dispute permanently, nor the anger for centuries does not burn. He does not follow us according to our sins (...). As the father is pouring on the sons, so the Lord pity the gods. He knows what we are made of, remembers that we are dust" (Ps 103: 8, 13).

In this context, John Paul II notes that mercy "does not pertain only to the notion of God, but it is something that characterizes the life of the whole people of Israel and each of its sons and daughters: mercy is the content of intimacy with their Lord, the content of their dialogue with Him"¹⁴ This dialogical character of charity is proof that it has both a theocentric and an anthropological dimension.

¹³ C.f. S. Budzik, *Dramat odkupienia. Kategorie dramatyczne w teologii na przykładzie R. Gerarda, U. von Balthasara i R. Schwagera*, Tarnów 1997.

¹⁴ DiM 4.

3. Jesus Christ – the new face of Divine Mercy

In His all-embracing love God, the “Father of Mercy” (2 Cor 1: 3; Jn 5:11), wanted to enter into a closer relationship with the sinner, to redeem him and enable him to share in Divine nature.¹⁵

The Second Vatican Council expressed this in the following way: “In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (see Eph. 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (see Eph. 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4). Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself. This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation”¹⁶.

Discovering the face of Jesus and contemplating His loving face leads us to recognize the true image of God, the Father of Mercy which urges Him to enter into communion with man, especially sinners. This communion is accomplished in the mystery of the Incarnation. In this context theology often asks why did

¹⁵ C.f. A. A. Napiórkowski, *Usprawiedliwienie grzesznika. Zróznicowany konsensus teologii katolickiej i luterkańskiej o usprawiedliwieniu osiągnięty w dialogu ekumenicznym*, Kraków 2000, p. 122–144.

¹⁶ Dogmatic constitution on Divine revelation *Dei verbum*, nr 2.

God become man? *Cur Deus homo?* Saint Anselm of Canterbury, the great medieval theologian, presented this issue in the most ingenious way¹⁷. However the first reply to this question is given by John the Evangelist: “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (Jn 1:14). The Word of God, that is the Son of God eternally existing with the Father was His reflection. He took on human form, a human face. Why does the author of the fourth Gospel say that the Word became “flesh” and not “man”? The term “flesh” in a biblical sense means a human being, who is weak, fragile, subject to change, suffering and death. Using the term “flesh”, John the Evangelist adds a sense of realism to the Incarnation. The Son of God assumed a true body; He became a man and therefore one of us.¹⁸

The mystery of the Divine Father’s mercy revealed itself, more, it became a reality – through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This event had its beginning in the Incarnation, when God and man not only met, but became one in the humanity of Jesus. Mary who represents the human race, gave her acceptance to God’s merciful proposition of eternal communion between Himself and man. In her, the Word made its home and dwelt among us (C.f. Jn 1:14), and Mary became the Mother of Mercy. Thanks to her Magnificat and belief that “nothing is impossible for God” (Lk 1:37), that “His mercy is from generation to generation, for those who fear him” (Lk 1:50), mercy became a dialogue. The history of salvation between God and Man began, and was characterized by freedom: the free gift of love and its free acceptance.

¹⁷ Tematykę rzeczywistości Wcielenia podjęli liczni teologowie średniowiecza, C.f. J. Leclercq, *Chrystus w oczach średniowiecznych mnichów*, Tyniec–Kraków 2001, p. 211–229.

¹⁸ C.f. J. Kudasiewicz, *Kontemplacja Oblicza Syna*, in: J. Kudasiewicz, H. Witczyk, *Kontemplacja Chrystusa – Ikony miłosiernego Ojca. Medytacje biblijno-kerygmatyczne*, Kielce 2002, p. 23.

The mystery of the Incarnation lay the foundations for a new anthropology: man who is redeemed can surpass his own limits and contradictions and move toward God. By grafting himself onto Christ he can even achieve divinity and be admitted to the Trinitarian life. Because the Son of God truly became man, in Him and through Him, we can truly become children of God.¹⁹ In his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio ineunte* announced at the Jubilee Year 2000²⁰, John Paul II strongly encouraged the deepening of this notion – one that the Fathers of the Church had already highlighted. The Pope wanted the Church, which was entering the third millennium, to emphasize Christ above all and to encourage the contemplation of His face.²¹ Once again starting from a contemplation of Christ effectively awakens an attitude of mercy in us: “Beginning with intra-ecclesial communion, charity of its nature opens out into a service that is universal; it inspires in us *a commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being*... Certainly we need to remember that no one can be excluded from our love, since “through his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every person”.²²

This relationship between God and man was in fact the central idea of the Second Vatican Council. It is clearly emphasized by the author of the Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* when he states: “The more the Church’s mission is centered upon man-the more it is, so to speak, anthropocentric-the more it must be confirmed and actualized theocentrically, that is to say, be directed in Jesus Christ to the Father. While the various currents of human thought

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 25.

²⁰ C.f. A. Napiórkowski, *Das Entdecken des Antlitzes Christi als wichtigste Aufgabe der Theologie. Reflexion über Novo Millennio Ineunte*, “Folia Theologica” 2003 nr 13 [Budapeszt/Węgry], p. 89–102. C.f. Ibid. *Człowieczeństwo Jezusa Chrystusa odsłania oblicze człowieka*, “Polonia Sacra” 2002 nr 11(55), p. 251–268.

²¹ John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* 6.1.2001 Vatican 2001, nr. 16–23.

²² Ibid nr. 49.

both in the past and at the present have tended and still tend to separate theocentrism and anthropocentrism, and even to set them in opposition to each other, the Church, following Christ, seeks to link them up in human history, in a deep and organic way. And this is also one of the basic principles, perhaps the most important one, of the teaching of the last Council”.²³

4. The Church’s mission to give witness to God’s mercy

Jesus teaches perfection (cf. Mt 5:48), and demands that his followers be merciful as the Heavenly Father is merciful (cf. Lk 6:36). This important condition must be fulfilled before a disciple of Christ can enter the kingdom of heaven. Mercy is not merely a divine attribute or a feature of Jesus Christ; it ought to characterize the attitude of every Christian. Mercy should encourage every follower of Jesus to be close to those we meet who are in need – as the Good Samaritan did. (cf. Lk 10:30-37). Showing mercy towards the least of our brethren, we show mercy to Christ himself (cf. Mt 25:31-46). We will be judged according to the mercy which in the name of Jesus we have shown to the needy:²⁴ “Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me” (Mt 25:45).

From the very inception the community of the faithful was conscious in the Holy Spirit, that the mercy of God manifested itself in the person and in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Even Christian ecclesiology preaching the preexistence of the Church, understood the covenant as an expression of God’s mercy.²⁵ This is evident

²³ DiM 1.

²⁴ C.f.. J. Cambier, X. Léon-Dufour, *Miłosierdzie*, p. 483.

²⁵ C.f. A. A. Napiórkowski, *Geneza, natura i posłanie Kościoła (Preegzystencja Kościoła w odwiecznym zamyśle Bożym)*, p. 73–76. C.f. J. Daniélou, *Teologia*

in a fragment of the letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament: "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets many times and in various ways but in these last days he has spoken to us through the Son" (Heb 1:1-2). The young Church was already characterized by its acts of mercy, and not just towards fellow believers. Early Christianity made tremendous strides in the enculturation of the faith. It purged Greco-Roman thought from some deeply anti-Christian ideas. Plato, Aristotle, and especially the Stoics, considered mercy, pity and compassion as manifestations of worthless sentimentality. For Aristotle, mercy was not a virtue but a weakness of the elderly and children. The Stoics considered it a disease of the soul. The Fathers of the Church opposed these views. They accepted Cicero's view however, who dismissed the Stoics' absurd notion of mercy. For Cicero mercy had elements of wisdom, moral order and goodness.²⁶

The mercy of God thus became an essential part of the Christian and the Church's mission. It is clear that it was and is constantly being practiced by the people who faithfully followed and continue to follow their Master and Bridegroom. Acts of mercy were and continue to be carried out by both the lay faithful and members of numerous religious orders and institutions of consecrated life. Referring to Jesus' message to the Polish nun St. Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938), there are three ways of carrying out God's mercy: word, deed and prayer.²⁷

judeochrześcijańska. Historia doktryn chrześcijańskich przed Soborem Nicejskim, trans.. S. Basista, Kraków 2002, p. 316–336.

²⁶ C.f. *Bóg Ojciec Miłosierdzia*. Oficjalny dokument Papieskiego Komitetu Obchodów Wielkiego Jubileuszu Roku 2000, tłum. S. Czerwik, red. B. Głodek, Katowice 1998, s. 61–67. C.f. L. Mateja, *Miłosierdzie w kontekście dobroci i cierpliwości w ujęciu Tertuliana*, "Verbum Vitae" 2003 nr 3, p. 203–212.

²⁷ C.f. J. Machniak, *The idea of divine mercy in the private visions of s. Faustina Kowalska in the context of the recent theology*, ACr 33 (2001), p. 433–450; T. D. Łukaszuk, *Teologia świętego obrazu w orędziu błogosławionej Faustyny Kowalskiej*, "Polonia Sacra"

Acts of mercy are linked to the evangelizing effort of the Church which is to spread far and wide, i.e. *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Today, the concept of evangelization is often misinterpreted in two different ways. Firstly, it is mistakenly reduced to the evangelization of “other”, so-called “missionary countries”, understood as those in which Christ is not yet known or those in which Church structures are not yet permanent and strong. Secondly, the process of evangelization itself is simplified in pastoral terms and is carried out as catechesis; teaching the catechism or preaching on morality. The most relevant and original definition of evangelization was given by Pope Paul VI: “Thus it has been possible to define evangelization in terms of proclaiming Christ to those who do not know Him”.²⁸

This expression of evangelization is complemented by John Paul II in the encyclical on missions: “People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission: Christ, whose mission we continue, is the “witness” *par excellence* (Rv 1:5; 3:14) and the model of all Christian witness. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Church along her way and associates her with the witness he gives to Christ (cf. Jn 15:26-27). The first form of witness is *the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community*, which reveal a new way of living. The missionary who, despite all his or her human limitations and defects, lives a simple life, taking Christ as the model, is a sign of God and of transcendent realities. But everyone in the Church, striving to imitate the Divine Master, can and must bear this kind of witness; in many cases it is the only possible way of being a missionary”.²⁹

1997 nr 1(45), p. 125–141. C.f. A. Witko, *Obraz Bożego Miłosierdzia*, Kraków 1993; W. Granat, *Miłosierdzie jako przymiot Boga*, in: *Ewangelia miłosierdzia*, ed. W. Granat, Poznań 1970.

²⁸ Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi* Vatican 1975, nr. 17.

²⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* Vatican 1990, nr. 42.

Why are witnesses of the faith so needed today? As Father Józef Kudasiewicz rightly observes, modern man believes witnesses more than teachers, experience more than doctrine, life and facts more than theories. The evangelization of the world through mercy will be most effective in the Holy Spirit through personal witness.³⁰

The Encyclical *Dives in misericordia* shows us the mercy of God as part of the Church's mission. It states: The Church of our time, constantly pondering the eloquence of these inspired words, and applying them to the sufferings of the great human family, must become more particularly and profoundly conscious of the need to bear witness in her whole mission to God's mercy, following in the footsteps of the tradition of the Old and the New Covenant, and above all of Jesus Christ Himself and His Apostles. The Church must bear witness to the mercy of God revealed in Christ, in the whole of His mission as Messiah, professing it in the first place as a salvific truth of faith and as necessary for a life in harmony with faith, and then seeking to introduce it and to make it incarnate in the lives both of her faithful and as far as possible in the lives of all people of good will".³¹

The Holy Father places three tasks before the Church. Witnessing to God's mercy is based on the following: 1) professing it as the salvific truth of faith; 2) its practical implementation, both by Christians and by all people of good will; 3) confidently calling upon it in the face of every form of physical and moral evil through prayer. When we look back at 2000 years of Christianity, we see that the Church, enlivened by the power of the Holy Spirit, has done fulfilled

³⁰ C.f. J. Kudasiewicz, *Głoszenie Ewangelii ukazywaniem Pana naszego Jezusa Chrystusa*, in: J. Kudasiewicz, H. Witczyk, *Kontemplacja Chrystusa – Ikony miłosiernego Ojca*, p. 303.

³¹ DiM 12.

these tasks even to the point of martyrdom³². On the other hand, one must humbly and truthfully admit that many times Christians have not only neglected to perform acts of mercy, but have even committed grave faults and sins.

5. John Paul II – ode to the mercy of God and the love of man

Many of St. John Paul II's writings show the connection between God's initiative of mercy and man's response to it through his loving devotion. Even leaving out *Dives in misericordia* one can list all the encyclicals in which this theme takes prominent place: *Redemptor hominis*, *Dominum et vivificantem*, *Redemptoris Mater*, *Redemptoris missio*, *Veritatis splendor*, *Evangelium vitae* and *Ut unum sint*.³³ We might also mention the apostolic exhortations in which the subject of mercy is presented: *Christifideles laici*, *Pastores dabo vobis*, *Vita consecrate*.³⁴

St. John Paul II's teaching on mercy bears the special mark of his homeland. It is worth noting that his ninth pilgrimage to Poland between 16–19th August 2002, had as its motto *God, rich in mercy*. The subject of Divine Mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation

³² It is enough to quote the extraordinary testimony of the Christian martyrs of all centuries; numerous brothers and sisters who witnessed faithfulness to God during the persecution of the Church. I think the twentieth century is worth special mention since it has produced many martyrs in many countries all over the world. C.f. *Męczennicy XX wieku* (Kolekcja Communio, 14), ed. L. Balter, S. Dusza, A. Piętka, Poznań 2001.

³³ The theme of Divine Mercy appears in all the important encyclicals of John Paul II, to the extent that one of them, *Dives in misericordia*, is devoted entirely to this subject. Most often mercy is related to the notion of love: C.f. RH 2, 21, 22; RM2; RMs 57; VS 10, 12–15, 17–20, 18, 22–24, 50, 64, 87, 88, 89, 95, 107; DeV 39, 67; EV 31, 41, 49, 81, 92, 93, 96–100; UUS 3, 8, 21, 36, 39, 42, 55, 58, 78.

³⁴ C.f. ChL 41, 53; PDV 27, 49; VC 6, 42, 44, 75, 82, 83, 89, 111.

is undoubtedly one of the predominant ideas of John Paul II's pontificate. We see this clearly not only thanks to the Encyclical *Dives in misericordia*, published in the third year of his Pontificate, but also through his canonization of Divine Mercy Missionary Sister Faustina Kowalska and the announcement of the second Sunday after Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday. In 2002, John Paul II highlighted and confirmed through his papal authority the message of God's mercy revealed in Cracow-Lagiewniki. Carefully taking into account the attitude and words of this saintly pope, one can conclude that he not only proclaims God's mercy but is also its authentic witness. He is a man of absolute trust and as the successor of St. Peter, he confirms his brethren in faith. Just as Sister Faustina confesses, "There is no other source of hope for man, but the mercy of God. In faith, therefore we say: Jesus, I trust in you!"³⁵

On August 17, 2002, the Holy Father expressed his personal adoration of the incomprehensible and unfathomable mystery of Divine Mercy in his homily at the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy in Cracow-Łagiewniki. He said: That is why we have come here today, to this Shrine of Łagiewniki, in order to glimpse once more in Christ the face of the Father: "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation" (2 Cor 1:3). With the eyes of our soul, we long to look into the eyes of the merciful Jesus, in order to find deep within his gaze the reflection of his inner life, as well as the light of grace which we have already received so often, and which God holds out to us anew each day and on the last day."³⁶

By proclaiming God's mercy and responding to God's love for man in Jesus Christ, John Paul II was concerned with the dialogical nature of the history of salvation. This dialogue is determined by both its theocentricism and anthropocentricity. Both these dimensions

³⁵ John Paul II, *Homily for the dedication of the Shrine of Divine Mercy*, Vatican 2002.

³⁶ Ibid.

exist in Jesus Christ, for He was the first to give His full human response to God ought of a desire for communion with humanity. At the same time, as the eternal Son of God in His own divinity He made Himself known to man. John Paul II, as a contemporary mystic, sings the praises of this merciful love of God and man's response to it. This ode reached its highest pitch when he made a solemn act of entrusting the world to God's Mercy.

He confessed the following in Cracow: "Today, therefore, in this Shine, I wish *solemnly to entrust the world to Divine Mercy*. I do so with the burning desire that the message of God's merciful love, proclaimed here through Saint Faustina, *may be made known to all the peoples of the earth* and fill their hearts with hope. May this message radiate from this place to our beloved homeland and throughout the world. May the binding promise of the Lord Jesus be fulfilled: from here there must go forth "the spark which will prepare the world for his final coming" (cf. *Diary*, 1732). This spark needs to be lighted by the grace of God. This fire of mercy needs to be passed on to the world. *In the mercy of God the world will find peace and mankind will find happiness!* I entrust this task to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to the Church in Kraków and Poland, and to all the votaries of Divine Mercy who will come here from Poland and from throughout the world. *May you be witnesses to mercy!*"³⁷

³⁷ Ibid.

Paweł Warchoń OFMConv

Providence, mercy and the experience of evil in the life of John Paul II

John Paul II's pontificate, which took place in turbulent times at the turn of the millennium, played out under the auspices of God's mercy and the care of Our Lady of Fatima. The rejection of God and contempt for man, which the Pope experienced during the Second World War and later in the years of Communism, coincided with the tangible intervention of Providence in his life. Despite the experience of diabolic evil, he was convinced of God's presence in the world. How did he understand this presence and how did he experience it?¹

1. Providence and evil

The theme of Divine Providence, or transcendent Wisdom, for whom man is the subject of his Love and in which he is called to participate, encounters difficulties. In a catechesis on this subject, John Paul II said that in the face of evil and suffering in the world,

¹ Text published in w "Lignum vitae" 8 (2007), p. 195–211.

many ask how does one recognize the infinite wisdom and goodness of God? Where does evil come from? Can Almighty God tolerate man's worst deeds? Why does He permit tragedies such as wars, concentration camps, the Holocaust, illness, injustice and death?² The Pope immediately reminds us of the author of the Book of Wisdom, who writes: "Evil does not prevail over (God's) wisdom" (Wis, 7:30).

John Paul II emphasizes that the answer to the question of evil and suffering in the world should be sought in the context of revelation.³ The Bible describes the physical and moral evil of its protagonists. The Pope analyses the tragedy of physical and moral evil experienced by Job, someone who questions and doubts but does not ultimately reject God. He tries to accept divine judgments through faith and seeks confirmation of the superiority of Divine Wisdom over all human inquiry. The Pope argues that physical evil is sometimes unintentional, which does not mean that it is not sometimes caused by man. However, moral evil is created solely by man.⁴

God does not want moral evil to exist because this means He would have to agree to the demise of man. Evil in the world is ultimately subordinated to good. In the context of the integral truth of Divine Providence, it is easier to distinguish between the claim that "God does not want evil in himself" and that "God permits evil". With regard to the first statement, the words from the Book of Wisdom bear repeating: "God did not make death and does not delight in the death of the living. For He created all things that they might exist" (Wis 1:13). The admission of evil in the physical order means that material entities (including the human body) undergo destruction and death; such is their nature. The Pope asks whether

² John Paul II, *Wierzę w Boga Ojca Stworzyciela*, Watykan 1987, p. 308.

³ Ibid. p. 309.

⁴ Ibid.

it is possible to imagine the limitless existence of each individual bodily entity in the present state of the material world. It becomes clear that “God did not make death” as the Book of Wisdom states, yet He allows it with regard to the total possible good of the material universe.⁵

However, God firmly and absolutely does not desire moral evil, that is, sin and wrongdoing. Moral evil is contrary to the will of God. If this evil exists in the history of man and the world – and sometimes it can seem overwhelming – it is admitted only because of the freedom God has given the world he has created.⁶

2. The Defeat of evil

In his last book, John Paul II wrote that we must look to mercy for an explanation of evil. Referring to the dramatic events of World War II and the apparitions of Sister Faustina, he states that: “Christ had wanted to reveal that the limit imposed on evil, of which man is both perpetrator and victim, is ultimately Divine Mercy. Evil does not have the last word! (...) the evil of the twentieth century was not a small-scale evil, it was simply ‘home-made’. It was an evil of gigantic proportions, an evil which availed itself of state structures in order to accomplish its wicked work, an evil built into a system”⁷. The Pope experienced such evil during the war. At the same time he knew that he was under the protection of Providence. He escaped death twice. First he was rescued from a Nazi search of his apartment⁸, next, he avoided death after an accident when

⁵ Ibid, p. 311.

⁶ Ibid, p. 311–312.

⁷ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity...* p. 60, 189.

⁸ After the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising (1944), the Germans tried to prevent a similar outburst of open resistance in Cracow by arresting all young men. This took place on August 6 (the Feast of the Transfiguration). Wojtyła – George Weigel writes – stood behind a closed door in his apartment in the basement during

a German truck hit him on the street⁹. While he was recovering in hospital, he pondered the special ways of Providence, and was convinced that there were no coincidences in God's plan.

At the end of his life, he could testify that God's grace, bestowed by Christ, is stronger than all evil. There is no evil from which God cannot draw forth a greater good. There is no suffering which he cannot transform into a path leading to him".¹⁰ He then adds: "this applies to all forms of suffering called forth by evil. It applies to that enormous social and political evil which divides and torments the world today: the evil of war, the evil of oppression afflicting individuals and peoples, the evil of social injustice, of human dignity

the round-robin, praying with pounding heart to be spared. The Germans did not find him. On the street he barely slipped out of Gestapo's roundup, and found himself in a bishop's residence, where there was an underground seminary. Irena Szkocka who walked in front of him as a guide helped him reach the seminar. At the request of Cardinal Sapieha, Wojtyła immediately put on a cassock. C.f. G. Weigel, *Witness to Hope*.

⁹ The decision to remain in the seminary was confirmed to him by Providence. On February 29, 1944, returning home after a double shift in Borek Fałęcki, he was hit by a German truck. Józef Florek, who saw the body of a young man in the street, jumped from the tram and stopped a car. Surprisingly, a German officer got out of it and ordered him to bring some murky water from a nearby ditch. When he saw that Karol was still alive, he stopped a passing truck and ordered it to take the half-conscious Karol to the city hospital. When one morning (April 1944) his colleague, who helped to serve the Mass and was also a candidate for the priesthood, did not come to the seminary, after a Mass, during which he served Cardinal Sapiecha, Karol went to his house to see what happened. It turned out that the Gestapo had taken him the night before. The name Jerzy Zachuta appeared on a Gestapo poster with a list of Poles who were to be shot.

¹⁰ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity* p. 189. Karol Wojtyła would write in his *Elementarz etyczny* that – Mercy is always associated with the movement from evil to good. (...) Evil can not produce good by itself. Good can only be born of some other good. Therefore the mercy of God is a Good that gives birth to good instead of evil. Mercy does not accept sin or ignore it, but it only helps in the conversion from sin – in different situations, sometimes in a final and decisive way". K. Wojtyła, *Elementarz etyczny*, Kraków 1979, s. 61.

trodden underfoot, of racial and religious discrimination, the evil of violence, terrorism, torture and the arms race”.¹¹

In the final pages of *Memory and Identity*, the pope widens the answer to the question of how to reconcile God’s love with the prevailing evil. The suffering of the Son of God is the limit of evil. “The suffering of the Crucified God is not just one form of suffering alongside others. (...) In sacrificing himself for us all, Christ gave a new meaning to suffering, opening up a new dimension, a new order: the order of love.(...)Yet the Passion of Christ on the Cross gave a radically new meaning to suffering, transforming it from within. (...) It is this suffering which burns and consumes evil with the flame of love. (...) Every human suffering, all pain, all infirmity contains within itself a promise of salvation, (...) All this evil is present in the world partly so as to awaken our love, our self-gift in generous and disinterested service to those visited by suffering”¹².

The crucified and risen Christ is the source of victory over evil. He reveals the power of love and the power of God and answers questions about the meaning of human existence. Thanks to Him, man can be genuinely free and experience the certainty of God’s actions. Love is found in the heart of Christ; it is greater and more sensitive than the greatest love we can experience on earth. It deserves to be met with unwavering confidence. The heart of Christ is an inexhaustible source of eternal life that nourishes human existence; it reveals the greatness of His saving love and hope for the future of the world. The Pope’s diagnosis of evil and its apparent power demands only thing of Christians: to embrace mercy and put an end to evil with Jesus.

¹¹ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*. p. 189–90.

¹² Ibid.

3. Mercy during the assassination attempt: The intervention of Our Lady of Fatima on May 13, 1981

Wojtyła experienced God's special intervention on May 13, 1981, when he was shot in St. Peter's Square and miraculously avoided death.¹³ After the assassination attempt, when he asked to see the documents relating to the mystery of Fatima, he understood that he was the mysterious figure dressed in white. It is not surprising that on May 13, 1982, exactly one year after the attack, he thanked Our Lady of Fatima during his visit to Portugal, for the great sign of mercy that his life was spared.

This is how he commented on the events: "In everything that has happened, I have seen – I will constantly repeat it – the special maternal care of Our Lady. And by coincidence – and simple coincidences do not exist in the plans of God's Providence – I also saw a call, perhaps to draw attention to the message that had come through humble rural children 65 years ago: the three Shepherds of Fatima. "Praise the name of the Lord, praise Him, for His mercy is forever "(Psalm 135: 1), here I am here with you in order to personally sing of this mercy, "because of the Lord's great love we

¹³ The assassination attempt occurred at the same time that the first apparition of Our Lady of Fatima took place. According to Spanish geophysics professor M. Linarez, it took place at 5.19pm. Anna Odra, an American of Polish descent, born on May 18, 1920 was also shot. Ali Ağca's gun blocked after these two gunshots. According to experts, this had a one in a million chance of happening. The Pope told journalist André Frossard said that one hand fired and another steered its course. And one more thing – on the eve of the assassination attempt the Pope received and personally blessed a gift from the German Caritas – an ambulance complete with life saving equipment. Thanks to this ambulance, he was brought very quickly to the Gemelli clinic.

are not consumed, for his compassions never fails” (Lm 3:22).¹⁴ Paraphrasing the Apocalypse, it can be said that the Lamb was stronger than the dragon.

It is worth observing human destiny through the prism of the miraculous work of Providence. Applying the criterion of faith and reason, one is amazed by the power of love that works so that man can exist. Like a mantle, Providence protected and saved John Paul II, led him to goodness and allowed him to fulfill the central goals of his life. It also reminded him about the truth of entrusting Russia and the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. God saved his chosen one and through him helped to save mankind.

The first years of the pontificate were very dangerous. The military expansion of the Soviet Union threatened the outbreak of World War III. John Paul II reading the message of Fatima, understood the urgent need to consecrate the world to Mary. The consecration prayer was written while the pope was still in the Gemelli clinic. It was first read in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major on June 7, 1981 on the Feast of Pentecost. The Pope was so weak that he was unable to come to this famous Roman church. However he read the text personally on May 13 1982 in Fatima, thanking Mary for saving his life. The Pope, however, wanted to consecrate the world in unity with all the bishops. On December 8, 1983, on the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, he addressed a letter to all the Catholic and Orthodox bishops of the world inviting them to the Vatican for the Feast of the Annunciation so that they could collegially repeat the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It took place in the Jubilee Year of the Family, as part of the celebrations of the Jubilee of Redemption (25 March 1984). Earlier, the pope decided to change the word “entrust” the Church and the bishops as pastors of the

¹⁴ C.f. John Paul II, *Przyszliśmy dziękować i błagać o Boskie miłosierdzie*. Przemówienie przy kaplicy objawień w Fatimie, 12 V 1982, OR 5 (1982), p. 6.

Church to the phrase “to place in her care”. In this way, he wanted to emphasize, that in the face of evil we are unable to act effectively without God’s intervention. By offering ourselves to God through Mary, we are sanctified by Him.

Sister Lucia, one of the Fatima visionaries who died in 2005, affirmed that the act of entrustment made by the pope fulfilled Mary’s requests. As a result, we avoided World War III and witnessed the fall of Communism. The Pope’s experience was a sign for all people. It makes us aware of the fact that there is Someone who cares about their fate. God is present in every act of life and every moment of history. One thing is certain: everything experienced on May 13, 1981, needs to be seen as sign of the mystery of God, which is unfathomable to man. Even if God does not expose all His secrets to us or explain the details of human destiny, the Pope’s experience must lead us to contemplation. Reason evokes faith without is necessary in order to obtain the ultimate answers to life.

4. The Holy Spirit brought down the walls of contemporary Jericho

The action of Divine Providence, so evident in the life of John Paul II, also became tangible in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. For decades, Communism, played spiritual and material havoc in Poland and in the world. To the chagrin of Marxists, the power of transcendent reality appeared, bringing “an explosion of good” and “a revolution” of the Spirit. In his encyclical *Centesimus annus* reminds us that: “Among the many factors involved in the fall of oppressive regimes, some deserve special mention. Certainly, the decisive factor which gave rise to the changes was the violation of the rights of workers. It cannot be forgotten that the fundamental crisis of systems claiming to express the rule and indeed the dictatorship of the working class began with the great upheavals which took place in Poland in the name of solidarity. It was the throngs of working

people which foreswore the ideology which presumed to speak in their name. On the basis of a hard, lived experience of work and of oppression, it was they who recovered and, in a sense, rediscovered the content and principles of the Church's social doctrine.¹⁵

The symbolic end of Communism came with the toppling of the Berlin Wall in 1990, which Joseph Ratzinger likened to the fall of Jericho. He wrote: "That the walls of Jericho would fall as the result of prayers, processions and trumpets for as long time sounded highly unlikely to us, enlightened people, Now, however, we have experienced something similar, though they were not the same but somehow alike. There is no longer an ideological wall that divides not only Europe, but in an invisible way the whole world. And it was not knocked down by the force of arms, and probably not directly through prayer alone, but by the explosion of spirit, by processions for freedom, which in the end proved stronger than the barbed wire and concrete. The Spirit proved his power; The sound of trumpets of freedom was stronger than the wall that was supposed to set boundaries. And even if we cannot place God's role in this game directly, it is always true that faith in Him, or at least the question about Him, was of great significance in interpreting this trumpet sound".¹⁶

It should be added that the overthrow of the Berlin Wall was the fruit of John Paul II's first visit to Poland in 1979 and his prophetic words: "Let your Spirit descend and restore the face of this land". Ratzinger's interpretation and the idea of a "revolution of spirit" in 1980 are consistent and allow us to understand Divine intervention in the liberation of the nations. Pope John Paul II's statement after the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe from

¹⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, Vatican nr. 23.

¹⁶ Cyt za: A. Nossol, *Przemiany 1989 roku jako nowe wyzwanie dla Kościoła w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej*, w: John Paul II, *Centesimus annus. Tekst i komentarze*, Lublin 1998, s. 92–93.

Communism is also remarkable: “In the unfolding of those events one could already discern the invisible hand of Providence at work with maternal care: “Can a woman forget her infant ...?” (*Is* 49:15).¹⁷ The changes which took place in 1989 made clear that there was nothing mechanical or fatalistic about them. Human freedom has worked fruitfully throughout history with God’s merciful plan. It is not surprising that John Paul II repeatedly proved that the driving force of history is culture, of which religion is at its heart.

Reference to the events of 1989 in the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* shows that God is the master of human history. Despite its apparent successes, the Communist project was a machination and therefore had to end in ruin. Military strength could not overcome those who had placed their trust in God. Injustice and evil do not triumph. During the canonization of Albert Chmielowski († 1916) and Agnieszka Czeska († 1282) John Paul II, interpreted the transformations of 1989 by saying that there are no ordinary coincidences in the plans of Providence. The example of Brother Albert showed that in the face of the Leninist temptation the idea of “greater freedom” – a life devoted to the service of the poor – won. The *sensus fidei* of the Czech people claimed that when their saint was canonized a miracle would happen. And indeed it did. “Everything that happens on earth is done by the will of God or by His grace, so that people feel the desire for truth and long for it, seek it and find it”¹⁸, said the Pope. Even during forty years of political captivity.

During his apostolic journeys, he taught that the Creator is not indifferent to the arrogance of the mighty and He cares for mankind when it is powerless. Those who trust in Him will not be disappointed. In the Book of Proverbs we find a synthetic statement:

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente* Vatican 1994, nr. 27.

¹⁸ John Paul II, Homily for the Canonization of Br. Albert Chmielowski Vatican 1989.

“Many are the plans in a person’s heart but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails” (19, 21). In a word, God tracks all mankind’s ways, even the wild and absurd ones that embody the “metaphysics of evil”, the “demonic side of life”, radical perversion, which loves evil for the sake of evil and good only through evil. God however knows all the secrets of the human heart.

In 1995, when John Paul II spoke at the United Nations, he emphasized that he was doing so on the liturgical Feast day of St. Faustina Kowalska – Apostle and Secretary of Divine Mercy. It therefore had a special meaning for him: “And I see a special expression as if her intercession, her message of Divine Mercy in this experience – the experience of the terrible World War II, and the subsequent effort to alleviate the moral consequences of war by building the United Nations, the Charter of Human Rights, and now – according to My proposal – also the Charter of the Rights of Nations”.¹⁹

Providence is an eternal presence in the history of individuals and communities, the providential *kairos* of great importance to the whole human family. The history of nations unfold under its watchful eye. Regardless of the evil that they experience, Divine Providence is its driving force. Conflicts, wars, cruelty, greed and suffering – all human evil, can be overcome by man as God’s helper, so that the world can achieve its ultimate fulfillment. It is enough to believe in Providence and to rethink one’s personal history, which is linked to the fate of the world and which explained by it. These words fill us with optimism, because not only do they show signs of hope in modern times but if we are faithful to God’s promises – they can help everyone who is in need. In the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, the Council Fathers wrote: “We can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough

¹⁹ John Paul II, *W imię chrześcijańskiej nadziei*. General Audience, 11 X 1995, OR 11–12 (1995), p. 13. (my own translation).

to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping”. John Paul II signed onto this definition as its co-author.²⁰

5. Birth and death in the plans of Divine Providence

One cannot forget two events in the life of Karol Wojtyła: his death and his birth. His death occurred on April 2, 2005, on the eve of the Feast of Divine Mercy, which he himself instituted. Through this, mankind received a powerful signal that revealed the meaning and value of his life. Benedict XVI said that John Paul II “showed us, so to speak, in the flesh, the Redeemer, redemption, and gave us the certainty that indeed, evil does not have the last word in the world”.²¹

The birth of Wojtyła was also remarkable. He was born in 1920 when the Bolsheviks were marching on Warsaw, just two years after Poland had regained her independence (1918). In a meeting with the participants of that battle, he said: “It was a great victory for the Polish armies – so great that it could not be explained in a purely natural way and that is why it was called the Miracle on the Vistula. To those who fell in the battle of Warsaw, and in Miracle on the Vistula, I have a special debt of gratitude”.²²

From the point of view of Providence, birth and death reveal the meaning and value of human life. The gift of life is the greatest expression of God’s love for man, because God “brought man forth” from the mystery of His being. Therefore, man’s personality is derived from God and His loving desire. Therefore, as the Pope taught, in order to know how to die one must combine the beginning in which we receive ourselves, with the end in which

²⁰ Gaudium et Spes nr. 31.

²¹ Benedict XVI, *Christmas greetings to Members of the Roman Curia* 22 XII 2005, Vatican 2005.

²² John Paul II, *Pozdrowienie końcowe po Liturgii Słowa*, OR 8 (1999), s. 87.

we fully surrender ourselves and in which we are fully accepted and devoted to ourselves. Throughout our lives we need to grow from the beginning to the end; to a good death, to an act of self-fulfillment, to being fully who we are from beginning to end – a gift of God. One should see human destiny in this way and look for such value in it. What would have happened if John Paul II had not been part of the history of the 20th century? Would the projects of Divine Providence have not been fulfilled?

6. Chosen and responsive to the intentions of Providence

The work of John Paul II shows mankind how freedom can work in history with God's merciful plan. Tomasz Węclawski sums this up well when he calls Providence "a good reference to the mystery of the encounter and the dialogue between two freedoms: the freedom of a God who loves His creation and the freedom found in that creation."²³ In the pope, we see the amazing link between his free and willing response to God's plans. He responded with great fidelity to the One he did not want to harm him but through Whom he came to know himself.

The Pope knew that Jesus Christ's Passion gives man pure hope. This is the truth about God who "so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him, shall not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). The truth about Providence in the perspective of Jesus' death and resurrection is confirmed by the fact that God – helpless yet omnipotent – entered into the world and the fate of every human being. "Providence", writes Jerzy Szymik, "is not something, it is someone – it is Jesus"²⁴.

²³ T. Węclawski, *"Abba" – wobec Boga Ojca*, Kraków 1999, p. 100.

²⁴ J. Szymik, *Traktat o Bogu Jedynym*, M. Paluch, *Traktat o zbawieniu*, Warszawa 2006, p. 175.

‘The Dark Night of the Soul’, which accompanied Karol Wojtyła from his birth to his last breath, was intertwined with the light of Divine Providence. He lived by faith and found the presence and sense of Divine action in his life. God prepared him to be able to illuminate humanity in His ways. He countered the aggression and evil he experienced with mercy – that which is totally “other” in God. He taught others about the value of mercy even during World War II. Praying in the Chapel of Divine Mercy, he drew strength from the words “Jesus, I trust in you,” passed on by St. Faustina Kowalska. Providence and mercy directed the fate of the Polish pope.

John Paul II proclaimed that mercy was God’s greatest attribute. Meanwhile, the Polish theologian Wincenty Granat († 1979) believed that God’s greatest attribute was Providence, which we understand better through the experience of our lives. Which of God’s attributes is the greatest? In the light of John Paul II’s life, both open us up to God, who is both close and paternal in nature and at the same time the One who continues to amaze. The Pope’s interpretation of Providence, as well as of evil and suffering, is not simply theoretical or philosophical in nature but it comes from his faith in the Crucified One. John Paul II symbolically showed this great love for Christ Crucified during the last Way of the Cross in his life, which he was not able to attend but which he watched a transmission of in his private chapel, hugging a crucifix to his heart.

A few months after his canonization, it is worth considering whether to grant John Paul II the title of Doctor of the Church, especially in the context of his spiritual connection to Faustina Kowalska. She instilled in him the idea mercy to which he was then faithful. The Pope in turn, elevated Faustina to sainthood and showed the greatness of her person. And this is not an isolated case, because the saints often walk in twos.

The message of mercy is a testimony to the apostolic spirit of John Paul II and his wide, prophetic vision of earthly reality.

Providence, mercy and the experience of evil in the life of John Paul II

Is it possible to measure the volume of graces poured into human hearts through the mercy of the St. Faustina and St. John Paul II? In light of God's generosity through the gift of these two people, "it is better to be silent and to adore, trusting humbly in the mysterious workings of God and singing his love without end: *"Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo!"*"²⁵ Learning about mercy remains a gift and a task. Although the earthly lives of Faustina and John Paul II are over, the call for the continuation of mercy is very much alive.

²⁵ NMI 8.

Andrzej A. Napiórkowski OSPPE

Why should John Paul II be called Great?

1. Methodological and substantive assumptions

In this paper, I would like to answer the question of whether St. John Paul II should be given the title Great. I will try to justify this assumption by comparing his person and work with that of Pope Leo I and Pope Gregory I, who were also given this title by posterity. In analyzing the personality and achievements of the three pontificates of Leo I, Gregory I and John Paul II, my attention will focus on three aspects in each of them. The first one will deal with the political and social activities of each of these popes, the second will be their activity within the Church, and the third will be to show their personal holiness.

There were many popes in the history of the Catholic Church. The lists differ in number. Official documents of the Holy See speak of 264 popes. They refine this number to 262, because Pope Benedict IX is listed three times, because he was elected and renounced the papacy the same number of times. Other lists place the number of successors of St. Peter between 260 and 266. Most often, this dispute concerns the legitimacy of the pontificates of Dioskur, Stephen, Leo VIII and Benedict V. Also, the names of certain

popes is not entirely certain. However, accepting that 264 popes served in the Church over the two thousand years of its existence, 80 are recognized as saints and 11 blessed. However, most of these lived in antiquity.¹

In the history of the Church, only three popes fulfilled all three conditions necessary to call their pontificates “great”. The first condition is an outstanding contribution to political, social and cultural life (especially in Europe), the next is to intra-ecclesial activity, and the third to the extraordinary moral standing of the Bishop of Rome. An analysis of the aforementioned popes seems to confirm that only three of them met all these criteria. Chronologically they are: Leo I, Gregory I and John Paul II.

2. St. Leo I the Great (400–461)

He was born at the end of the fourth century in Tuscany or Rome and became pope on September 29, 440. He received an education in rhetoric, philosophy as well as Latin and Greek literature. Prior to the Pope’s election, he was involved in the service of the Roman Church as a deacon. Later, during Pope Celestine I’s pontificate (422–432), he became an archdeacon. He also enjoyed the emperor’s favor. History remembers him as an eminent theologian and diplomat.

2.1. Intra church activity

Leo I was not only an outstanding pope, but also a theologian and statesman. His contribution to the doctrine of the Church and its inner spiritual renewal remains undisputed. There are two collections of his writings, which are an important source of knowledge of the history of the Church, theology, liturgy and spirituality from

¹ C.f. H. Stadler, *Leksykon papieży i soborów*, Warszawa 1992, p. 7–10.

the mid-fifth century. He conducted a lively correspondence with important people of his time.²

It is worth noting his struggle for the purity of faith in his polemics with Eutyches. These were based on rejecting the false statements proclaimed at the Second Ephesian Council (449). What turned out to be the most important, however, was the fact that through his papal authority Leo I did not approve them. The Council was therefore annulled and passed into history as a “rogue synod”. Eutyches, abbot of three hundred monks in the monastery in Constantinople, proclaimed that Christ was indeed a composite of “two natures” (*ek dyo physeon*) but not *in* two natures. This meant that the *Logos* accepted human nature but neither nature retained its integrity. Jesus’ humanity was absorbed by his Deity, like a drop of water in the sea. The god in Jesus “swallows up” the man.

Thus, Pope Leo sent a letter to Flavian, patriarch of Constantinople, in which he stressed the full and lasting integrity of both natures in Christ. In time, this letter was named *Tomus Leonis* (*Tomus ad Flavianum*). This document is primarily soteriological and explains that our salvation depends on the fact that Christ is at the same time fully in us and fully in God (*totus in suis, totus in nostris*). Only in this way can He fully accept our limitations and submit to death, and at the same time can He free us through his sacrifice to life everlasting in God.³

This papal teaching was adopted by the Fourth Council of Chalcedon in 451 – convened by the emperor Marcian – and confirmed the teaching of Leo I of the two natures of Jesus Christ (God and man), experiencing hypostatic union in one Divine Person. In the Chalcedonian judgments we read: “Following the Church Fathers, we all unanimously teach that there is one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in Deity and perfect in humanity, true God

² C.f. P. Szczur, *Leon I Wielki*, w: EK, t. X, k. 765–766.

³ C.f. *Brevarium Fidei* II, 7.

and true man, composed of a rational soul and flesh, consubstantial to the Deity. In our humanity, he was like us “in everything but sin” (Heb 4:15). For ages He was born of the Father as God, and in the last days for us and for our salvation he was born as man of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God; One and the same Christ, the only Son, is to be recognized in two natures without confusion, without conversion, without division and without separation. The difference of nature is not removed by their unity, but the properties of each are preserved and united in one person in one coexistence. You can not divide or separate them in two, because there is one and the same Son of God alone, the Word of God, Jesus Christ, as the prophets preached about Him, and as Jesus Christ Himself taught us. Therefore, The Council of the Universal Church ordained with great care and diligence no other truth should be preached, written, laid down, thought or taught.”⁴

Pope Leo turned out to be a great theologian. He became part of the whole continuity of ecclesiastical tradition, beginning with the Apostles, through the Council of Nicaea (351), Constantinople I (381) and Ephesus (431), and made his original contribution to Christology.⁵

Leo's contribution was also highlighted in other areas in defense of the purity of faith. He fought against false teachings that had penetrated interpretations of Christian revelation. Leo I was against the Manichaeans. At the Pope's request, Emperor Valentinian III had expelled them from Rome and deprived them of citizenship. He also combatted with the Pelagians, with Nestorians, Monophysites and Priscillians. He urged John Cassian to write a work on incarnation (*De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium libri VII*), directed against Nestorius. Pope Leo also rejected the

⁴ BF II, 8.

⁵ C.f. P. Szczur, *Leon I Wielki*, w: EK, t. X, k. 766.

provisions of the National Synod in Ephesus in 449, which was named the “rogue synod”.⁶

Leo the Great left behind many letters and sermons from his theological and pastoral ministry. Pope Benedict XIV proclaimed him a Doctor of the Church. It is worth highlighting the importance *Letter 28* again. He is also the author of the so-called *Indiculus*, a collection of fundamental truths of faith. It should be noted that his authorship here is questionable. What is undisputed however, are the numerous sermons, liturgical texts and other works written by him. In the West, he is also revered as the patron saint of musicians and singers.

2.2. Pope Leo and changes in Europe

The political, social and cultural transformations that arose from Leo's personal involvement and inspiration are invaluable. At the outset, it is necessary to show his commitment to rescuing Italians, especially the people of Rome, from barbarian invasions. As head of the delegation of the Roman Senate, he set off to Mantua where he met with Attila The Hun (406–453), along with his brother Bled, who had created a powerful empire that stretched from Denmark to the Balkans, from the Rhine to the Caspian Sea. Leo I proved to be such a convincing leader, that he dissuaded Attila from destroying Rome. A similar situation occurred with regard to King Genseric. In 455, Pope Leo persuaded the Vandals' army to cease looting and devastating the city on the Tiber. He therefore, not only saved Rome's extraordinary monuments but above all its people. It should also be noted that in the context of the emperor's weakening power, his importance as pope and ruler naturally increased significantly.

⁶ C.f. H. Stadler, *Leksykon papieży i soborów*, Warszawa 1992, p. 175–176.

One must be remember that in 395, the Roman Empire fell. Christianity was becoming a religion that was especially located on the territory of this Empire. In 313, the Emperor Constantine granted freedom to Christians in the Milanese Edict. In turn, the Emperor Theodosius the Great, made Christianity the privileged religion in an edict issued in 380. Thus, in just four centuries Christianity had changed from being a religion of the persecuted and oppressed, to one that had gained privileged status. On the one hand, this was a positive thing because Christians could freely confess their faith, build temples and worship. The followers of the new religion could therefore officially, without prejudice, danger to their health, life or property, profess their faith in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, it resulted in the baptism of a huge amount of people who were completely spiritually and doctrinally unprepared for accepting Jesus' faith. There were now worldly benefits to being a Christian. Whole groups of people wanted to be baptized without adequate preparation. The catechumenate as such, which had provided a period of lengthy preparation and introduction into the mysteries of Christianity, disappeared. It entered into the emancipated structures of the state, into the emptiness of political, social and cultural life that emerged after the disappearance and collapse of the centuries-old power of the Roman Empire.

It can be said that in this moment it lost its mystery, its spontaneity, the full transcendent experience of meeting with the living God. It became a religion with a specific doctrine of faith, observance of rites of worship and clear rules of moral conduct. On the other hand, the masses of the faithful, who suddenly came into the Church, impoverished the inner life of its former followers.

It is worth noting that early Christian writers of the First ages unfortunately did not meet the challenge of evangelization, because they did not set out or elaborate upon a theological vision that would introduce the followers of Jesus Christ into these structures in a harmonious way. The Church ceased to be a charismatic community

and became increasingly institutionalized. Leo I however, turned out to be a great, providential pope, because he filled this “emptiness” with Christian values. One can submit that thanks to his bright mind, the institutional structure which remained after the Roman Empire became the vehicle of the Christian message to serve God and love one’s neighbor.

Beginning with the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, Leo I claimed that Rome was established by the Savior as the summit of the world (*Arx Romani Imperia*). This belief lay the foundation of the idea of the Church’s exercise of power. Due to this, the Pope has a special role to play, since the tomb of Peter – the Prince of the Apostles was to be found in Rome. Morality must also take place in a social context. As the successor of Peter he established the understanding of papal primacy. According to him, the pope’s sovereignty over the whole Church results from the passing of the supreme authority passed on by Jesus to each successive bishop of Rome.

He favored the Church being supported by secular authorities, especially in maintaining ecclesiastical discipline and in combating heresy for which he allowed the death penalty. Although Leo recognized the right of the emperor to convene synods and councils, he rejected that the ecclesiastical importance of the episcopal seat depend on the secular status of the city. Therefore Constantinople, even though it was the seat of the emperors, did not have priority over Rome.⁷

2.3. The sanctity of Pope Leo the Great

Both in his teaching and in his personal life, Pope Leo relied on the frequent practice of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. He was inspired by Jesus’ teaching from the Sermon on the Mount which

⁷ C.f. P. Szczur, *Leon I Wielki*, w: EK, t. X, k. 767.

connected contemplation with a testimony of love. He believed that true faith leads to concern for the good of one's neighbor. According to him, only the one who loves his fellow man truly knows God and is born of Him.

The Pope's spirituality was centered on the Incarnation. It is from God's loving acceptance of human nature that the whole of Christian life is given direction. From it can human beings show love, mercy and forgiveness. The real presence of God in the "other" encourages service, especially towards the materially and spiritually poor, because Christ, having human nature, also experiences hunger, thirst, nudity and suffering. Practicing almsgiving, prayer and fasting (*triplex observantia*) leads man to open himself to up God and neighbor. These works of love bring liberation to the one who practices them, as well as harmonizing daily life with the faith and uniting him with the Holy Spirit.⁸

Pope Leo was buried in the portico of St. Peter's Basilica. From the moment of his death he was worshiped. The cult of his person and numerous pilgrimages to visit his tomb led Pope Sergius I to transfer his relics to the interior of the basilica in 688 and display his epitaph. His remains were transferred again in 1607. In 1715, Pope Clement XI finally moved the relics of St. Leo to an altar of the Vatican Basilica that was dedicated to him. Benedict XIV issued the papal bull *Militantis Ecclesiae* on October 12, 1754, proclaiming him a Doctor of the Church.⁹

Leo I also earned the title 'Great' because of his beautiful spiritual attitude. He is rightly revered as a saint in the Church. He did not gain the title 'Great' by chance, because both on a socio-political level and in the cultural life of Europe at that time, his working within the Church, and by dint of his personal holiness, he confirmed the correctness of what future ages would associate with

⁸ C.f. P. Szczur, dz. cyt., k. 768–769.

⁹ C.f. E. Wójcik, *Leon I Wielki*, w: EK, t. X, k. 769.

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his name. The title Great was a recognition by those who followed him of his organizational, theological and moral genius.

3. St. Gregory the Great (540–601)

Gregory was born in 540 into a patrician family. His parents, Gorgian and Sylvia, were also made saints. Gregory's upbringing was also influenced by the aunts who, in the history of the Church, are also considered holy: St. Emiliana and St. Warsilia. Gregory spent his youth in his family home near the palace of Emperor Septimius Severus and the already existing basilica of St. John, St. Paul, St. Clement and the Lateran Basilica. Raised in a senatorial family, he held various civil offices. He finally arrived in 572 to become a prefect of Rome. After four years of fairly successful rule (572–575) he unexpectedly joined the Benedictine Order. His home was transformed into a monastery for twelve companions. This decision that caused a sensation; here for the first time great nobleman of Rome became a poor monk. With his great fortune, Gregory founded six other monasteries on his Sicilian possessions. He himself lived praying and fasting in the Roman monastery on the Caelian hill

3.1. Political, social and cultural activity in Europe of the time

It must be said that Gregory undoubtedly had great political career, from which he resigned. Having led a penitential religious life, he was noticed by then Pope Benedict I, who ordained him as deacon of the Roman Church in 577. In 579 Pelagius II made him his representative at the court of the Eastern Empire. Therefore as a monk Gregory went with several companions to Constantinople. He spent seven years there between 579–586 and showed great diplomatic abilities. He spoke Greek fluently and fulfilled Pope Pelagius II's mission. As a sign of the Pope's appreciation for his efforts, he nominated him as his personal secretary. When the

pope died in 590, Gregory was unanimously elected as the pope by the acclamation of the people, the senate and the clergy of Rome. Gregory, who had previously resigned from a seductive and lucrative position in the secular hierarchy, also now could not envision himself as the ruler of the universal Church. Therefore, at first he did not accept this office. He even wrote a letter to the Eastern emperor asking him not to approve of his election to the papacy. However, things turned out differently and on October 3, 590 he was consecrated as the Bishop of Rome.¹⁰

Already at the beginning of his pontificate Gregory made a significant impact on the history of the Roman people. In 590 Rome the city experienced one of its worst disasters. Plague, hunger and poverty appeared. The Pope was personally involved in saving the people. He was engaged not only in prayer, penance, fasting and processions of mercy, but he also helped practically.

During the reign of Pope Gregory, the borders of Christendom moved visible northwards. He was very influential in the Christianization of the Anglo-Saxons. The King of Kent was baptized. Spain abandoned Arianism, returning to the orthodox faith, and the Longobards were baptized, all thanks to his missionary commitment. He also turned out to be astute in husbandry. He was able to prevent upcoming famines. He was a good ruler. Full of mercy, he often distributed food. He gave Latin civilization a new direction and a creative impulse.¹¹

3.2. The Pope's contribution to the inner life of the Church

Gregory I's pontificate was of great significance. At the beginning of his reign he gave himself a humble title, which at the same time was to be the program of his pontificate: *Servus*

¹⁰ C.f. S. Rosik, *Gregory I Wielki*, w: EK, t. VI, k. 324.

¹¹ C.f. Ibid, k. 325.

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Servorum Dei (Servant of the Servant of God). At the same time he sent envoys to the patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria with messages full of humility, thus gaining their genuine favor.

He documented his theological-moral thought in numerous works, of which the most comprehensive is the textbook on morality, asceticism and mysticism, the source of ethical and psychological facts about the life of man (*Moralia, sive Expositio in Job*). He also set out an ideal of Christian morality, which was the attitude of a believer in the creative and saving economy of God, and understood man's ultimate vocation. Christian life understood in this manner encouraged the development of values and the dignity of the human person, who had received a call from God to enter into a close union with him. The originality of this thought lies in the ability to apply and adapt speculative content to the practical requirements of life. In this way he created a particular theological-moral synthesis, of which the desire to seek God is at its heart and unite the different individual states of human life.¹²

Every day he preached the word of God himself. He removed unworthy officials from the papal curia, and did similarly with unsatisfactory bishops and priests in the parishes. He also reformed administrative aid for the poor. He took care of Roman churches and Italian dioceses. For better control he appointed a separate inspector from among the bishops. He was very vigilant in punishing abuses. He required priests to remain celibate, and those dissatisfied with the new order were dismissed from their offices. He was especially against monasteries, which allowed women to enter them freely.

Apart from his numerous and absorbing administrative and public works, the Pope left behind a rich theological legacy. His most

¹² C.f. Ibid, k. 330.

valuable works are *The Dialogues*, *Pastoral Rule*, *Reginensis*, *Homilies* and *Letters*. To date, 582 of his letters have survived. This is the largest epistolary collection of Christian antiquity

In the Church, Pope Gregory I left behind a great legacy in music and liturgy. He can be merited with ordering and systematizing liturgical singing, which in our day is known as the Gregorian chant (from his Latin name *Gregorius*). According to tradition – he collected and systematized all choral melodies that were in circulation into one work, called the “antiphonist”. His original was lost in the Middle Ages. Only handwritten transcripts have survived. The oldest copy comes from the Benedictine monastery in St. Gallen.

3.3. The sanctity of Gregory I

Pope died on March 12, 604. His body like that of Leo the Great, Gregory was laid to rest in St. Peter’s Basilica. His cult began shortly after his death. Isidore of Seville (560–636) praised his humility and God-fearing nature. Ildefonsus of Toledo (607–667) described the sanctity of his life as well as the gift of oratory and wisdom. In 1831 Pope Gregory XVI established the Order of St. Gregory, which is bestowed for outstanding service to the Holy See. In 1990, on the occasion of the 1400th anniversary of Gregory’s election to the papacy, a special symposium was held in Rome for which Pope John Paul II issued an apostolic letter.¹³

In the history of the Church Gregory I was also revered for his outstanding moral values. His sanctity went down in history. We can therefore conclude that he fulfills the third condition needed to acquire the meritorious distinction of the title ‘Great’. After Leo I, he is the second Pope to whom it has been appointed. Also like St. Leo, Gregory was proclaimed Doctor of the Church.

¹³ C.f. J. Misiurek, *Gregorz I Wielki*, w: EK, t. VI, k. 331.

4. St. John Paul II the Great

Karol Józef Wojtyła was born on May 18, 1920 in Wadowice. He died in the Vatican on April 2, 2005 as Pope John Paul II. He was a poet, polyglot, actor, playwright and professor, specializing in the philosophy of phenomenology. He was also a prominent representative of Christian personalism and a mystic. He made the Church more accessible and open to the people. The Jesuit theologian, Cardinal Avery Dulles, expressed this in the following words: More than any other man he managed to comprehensively renew the outline of Catholic faith in the light of Vatican II and in relation to the post-conciliar achievements of the Church and of the world”.

4.1. Socio-political questions

When Cardinal Wojtyła was elected as Bishop of Rome in 1978, the world was clearly divided. This division ran deep, especially in Europe. Two totalitarian systems: communism and fascism, despite more than thirty years of the end of World War II (1939–1945), left a lasting impact on the psyche, culture, mentality and way of thinking in Europe and beyond. Western Europe, with its own arrogance and pathologies, demanded the right to shape the whole of Europe. In turn, people living east of the Elbe lived in a state of economic and social underdevelopment, and despite their complexes were resigned to this economic stasis. Both sides however saw economic development, as the be all and end all of success. The worth of a human being depended on his material status.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the world was divided into two political blocks – East and West. The cold war continued. From the outset of his pontificate however John Paul II made great strides towards the political, economic and cultural

unity of the Old Continent. Later, he would unite Europe, by being a inspiration for the history of this continent. Still, his contribution to the fall of communism and reconciliation between Eastern and Western Europe is still not fully appreciated. There can be no doubt that communism was overcome due to his deep mysticism. The Pope was able to entrust and consecrate Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and thus to fulfill the request of Our Lady of Fatima (March 1984). In Central and Eastern Europe surprising things began to happen. He was able to open the eyes of Western Europeans to the true face of communism. Freedom was achieved thanks to his prayer and teaching. He gave people courage and called them to solidarity.¹⁴

It is also important to emphasize his contribution to the Fall of the Berlin Wall, which was torn down thanks to the efforts of the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union known as *Solidarność* (Solidarity), which was born Gdansk, Poland. This trade union turned social movement was continually inspired and strengthened by John Paul, and thus contributing to the overthrow of the Berlin Wall and the unification of two Germanies (the German Federal Republic and the GDR).

St. John Paul II has gone down in history as the pope of freedom. He defended the oppressed, which is confirmed by his first trip to Mexico where he said that he would be the voice of all the persecuted, of the Mexican workers, the mistreated and the exploited. When we speak of John Paul II as the pope of freedom, we must remember that he proclaimed not only external freedom, but also the need to preserve inner freedom. For only that can the shackles of bondage be cast off.

Marek Nowakowski rightly points out that there is no reason to avoid speaking of the pope as a politician. He actually played

¹⁴ C.f. T. Tindal-Robertson, *Fatima, Rosja i John Paul II*, Warszawa 1994, s. 5.

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a huge political role. Finally we cannot forget about his struggle for building a civilization of life and his opposition to all forms of abortion. He also tried to introduce the principle of the holiness of life (a civilization of love and culture of life) to Western Europeans as well the value of personalism. This holy Pope was a great defender of life and the family.¹⁵

4.2. Achievements within the Church

John Paul II was faithful to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. The idea of reforming the Church was continued and intensified during his pontificate. He repeatedly opened new chapters in the history of the Catholic Church which spoke of the oneness of man with God, man with fellow man, and man with his own conscience. In the first encyclical *Redemptor hominis* he set out the program for his pontificate: the way of the Church – he wrote – is man. And that was the breakthrough or rather continuation of the “revolution” of the Council. Many people at that time (and perhaps people still) thought that the opposite was true; the Church is the way of man. That man should serve the Church and not the Church, man. The Church is truly Christ-like when it is human, or simply when it is an instrument for the oneness of man with God. John Paul did not forget notion that “a priest is taken of men, and for men is he appointed”. He was always there for the people. As a result, he often did not have time for the Roman Curia. Many administrative matters were initially delegated to competent collaborators. He knew that Christ had entrusted Peter with the task of “strengthening of the brethren” rather than the administration of important works of art the Church had produced centuries ago. As a pastor he presided over the prayer of the Church. He has did so in the area of his assigned Church. In his Roman diocese, which returned to a long

¹⁵ C.f. J. M. Nowakowski, *Jan Paweł Wielki*, [dostęp: 28.01.2011] http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/T/TH/THO/jp2_jmnowakowski.html.

forgotten practice of visiting the parishes annually, and holding large liturgical assemblies in the basilica of St. Peter and in other Roman basilicas, as well as all his apostolic journeys. It seemed that after over a dozen hours on a flight, without taking heed of his jet-lag, he would go straight from the plane to where the faithful of the diocese awaited him in order to preside over another Eucharist.¹⁶

He was the first pope to enter a synagogue, and he repeatedly met with Jews. He also undertook deep ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. He inspired the World Youth Days which have been celebrated since 1985. They became regular mass meetings of young people with the Pope in different around the world. John Paul II also organized a great, engaging meeting in Assisi for representatives from all world religions. They prayed together to God the Father came for peace in the world.

In 1999 John Paul II also inaugurated the celebration of the Great Jubilee of the Twentieth Century of Christianity. The Holy Year, which then began, was filled with many celebrations in Rome involving millions of pilgrims from all over the world. His body of teaching was also vast. He wrote 14 encyclicals and 15 exhortations, 11 apostolic constitutions and 43 apostolic letters. He announced dozens of messages and gave hundreds of catechizes. Already as a pope, he published six books, including the poetic work, *the Roman Triptych*.¹⁷ He canonized 478 saints and beatified 1,318 blessed.

4.3. Mystic

John Paul II undoubtedly deserves the glory of the altars. Already at the funeral of the Pope, many participants held banners with the inscription *Santo subito*, demanding his immediate canonization. When he died on April 2, 2005, millions of people

¹⁶ C.f. A. Boniecki, *Jan Paweł Wielki*, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 2 April 2005.

¹⁷ C.f. M. Zięba, *Jestem z Wami. Kompendium twórczości i nauczania Karola Wojtyły – Jana Pawła II*, Kraków 2010, p. 305.

came to St. Peter's Basilica and paid homage to him. Hundreds of thousands of people, including dozens of heads of state and government, delegates of all denominations and religions, took part in his funeral ceremony on April 8. Already in his lifetime, his words and gestures prompted many to convert and be united with God.

In February 2011, Archbishop Alfons Nossol at a private meeting in Kamień Silesia witnessed how great yet how unassuming John Paul's relationship with God was. As a young priest, he began his doctoral studies at the Catholic University of Lublin, where he attended the lectures of Bishop Karol Wojtyła. These classes were rigorous and difficult. Admittedly, the students considered Wojtyła a friendly and open professor, but he was demanding. In the academic year 1955–1956, Father Nossol took part in lectures on Christian sexual ethics based on Max Scheler's system. The first classes were attended by crowds, nearly 200 students. Who was then talking about sexuality? When the semester ended, only 4 students wished to take the exam. Father Nossol was sent to ask the lecturer for notes, since it was very difficult to keep up with Wojtyła during the lecture. When Nossol came and asked for the content of the lectures, Bishop Wojtyła did not hesitate to give an entire file of finely and carefully written pages. He only asked him not to mix them up. As it turned out Bishop Wojtyła did not use Arab numbers for the pagination. Instead of numbers on the pages there were the letters of the alphabet, which were arranged in prayers. The first letters of the Latin prayers *Te Deum laudamus*, the Magnificat or psalms were in the top margin of the page. At every moment of his life, he was in deep communion with God. His mysticism was so natural that it went almost unnoticed.

His beatification, which took place on the St. Peter's Square on May 1, 2011, confirmed the clear conviction and not only the Catholic faithful that he was a man of God. On that day, the coffin with his temporal remains was transferred from the Vatican crypt to the chapel of St. Sebastian in St. Peter's Basilica.

By sketching an outline of the person and accomplishments of St. John Paul II we see that he fulfilled all three criteria needed to name him 'Great'. He unquestionably contributed to building the unity of Europe and was a man of freedom who always valued and fought for the rights and dignity of the human person. The title 'Great' was first bestowed on him in the homily given by Cardinal Angelo Sodano during the Mass at St. Peter's Square on Sunday, April 3, 2005.

* * *

At the time of his death, news and publicity programs for the largest American television stations also used the term John Paul II the Great. In any case there were already books published while he was alive which referred to him using this title.¹⁸ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Pope Benedict XVI began his speech with the words, "After the great Pope John Paul II...". Since then, he repeatedly referred to his predecessor, John Paul II in this way. Also the present Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis, repeatedly uses this adjective in reference to John Paul II.

Further research, pastoral and artistic efforts as well as much prayer are needed on both in Poland and internationally in order to transform the adjective 'Great' into the term "doctor of the Church" in reference to the Polish Pope.

¹⁸ C.f. Cz. Ryszka, *Jan Paweł II Wielki*, Edycja Świętego Pawła, Częstochowa 2002.

Andrzej A. Napiórkowski OSPPE

Does the contemporary world need Doctors of the Church?

1. An outline of the problem

For a few decades now we have been witnessing the Church's unlikely opening up to the modern world. It is indispensable but sometimes happens too uncritically. The *Aggiornamento* initiated by St. John XXIII who announced the convocation of the Second Vatican Council in 1959 and opened its deliberations in 1962, continues to bring surprising changes and new challenges. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, who leads the community of believers in Jesus Christ, *aggiornamento* has not become a "conforming" to the world, but a theological category. The *Accomodata renovatio* (Latin) is an adapted renewal, which referred both to adapting to the conditions of the modern world and a faithful continuity in the teaching of the Gospel.

In the final analysis there was no break with the centuries-old tradition of the Church, rather the profound vitality of the Gospel was revealed. Fears did not prove substantiated because there was no reduction in faith, rather its flourishing in post-Conciliar renewal movements. In large part, the Church had already disposed of the "besieged fortress" mentality that it had acquired over the centuries since the founding of the Church State (*Patrimonium*

Sancti Petri), until the donation of Pepin 751, even more: at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century it had become a living organism. Some commentators of the Second Vatican Council minimize its meaning and role by claiming that it ended the “Tridentine” epoch in the Church, which had begun in the 16th century with the Council of Trent (1545–1563), which was held to end the crisis caused by the reformist movements of the 15th and 16th centuries. These movements eventually divided Western Christianity into Roman Catholicism and Protestantism of various confessions. The deliberations at the Council of Trent are not a sufficient background and reference point for Vatican II. One should assess the importance of the Second Vatican Council in the light of the whole history of the Church. On the one hand, the autonomy of the world, its desires and needs must be respected and, on the other hand, one must never cease in obeying Christ. One must first listen to the Holy Spirit and only then explore the spirits of this world.

Hence, it is right to speak of Vatican II as a council of change, and of significant change because in terms of Church – world relations it referred to the first centuries of Christianity by going beyond the borders of medieval Christendom. The Church’s hierarchy for the most part left church bastions and went out into the world, which is also God’s creation and for which Christ also redeemed by his suffering and which is in constant need of the presence and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Church has ceased to be a fossilized and centralized organization, stubbornly opposed to everything that comes from the outside and that is modern. In turn, theology took up many other important issues and leaving aside the question of primacy to which excessive attention had been paid. The postmodern vision of the Church has undergone a radical change, including transformation of thinking. It withdrew from its position of power to adopt an attitude of service and openness. And this process of moving from an ecclesiology to hierarchism to one of *communio* – is gradually ongoing.

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Based on the testimony of the participants in Vatican II, it is fair to say that the Council was an *event of faith for the enrichment of faith*. Faith understood not as an intellectual collection of abstract truths, but above all as a personal experience. Such faith becomes testimony and mission. Therefore, the fathers saw in the Council not so much an intellectual and ecclesial dimension as in the gift of faith to the modern world. Faith is therefore not only an answer to the word of God in the ecclesial space, but also its manifestation in the modern world. Confrontation with the world and missionary activity lead to purification of the faith and of the Church and they also enrich the world. Do not be concerned by the world but be concerned for it. Do not be concerned by people but concerned for them.¹

To answer the question-*does the modern world need the Church's doctors?* – let us first try to present the understanding of the Church and its mission in the light of the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council and the theological reflection of the eleventh hour in order to show it to the contemporary world. Against this background, in the final reflection we will try to answer the question in the title.

2. The renewal of the Church

One must admit that the current understanding of the Church has undergone quite serious changes, both in the consciousness of the community of believers and in nonbelievers. Today, the Church is not understood merely in terms of the clergy but as a community of all the baptized (clergy, consecrated persons and lay faithful). Everyone, depending on the charisms assigned to him, is responsible for the whole. The Church is a Divine-human community, where in the sacramental reality of salvation leads to a meeting between

¹ More on this subject: A. Napiórkowski, *Wiara w Kościele, lecz dla świata. Rekonstrukcja interpretacji nauczania Vaticanum II*, "Polonia sacra" 17(2013) nr 2(33), s. 53–69.

man and God, and between man and fellow man. The Church is a complex reality where heaven and earth, grace and nature, holiness and sin intertwine. The ecclesiological character of the Second Vatican Council was manifested in showing the Church from the inside (*ad intra*): its spirituality, nature and mission, and from the outside (*ad extra*): in its various and multifaceted relations with other religions, communities, states, cultures and the whole world.

Before the Council, ecclesiology focused on the position of institutionalism. It is no exaggeration to say that institutional ecclesiology had been reigning for eleven centuries, from the time of the founding of the ecclesiastical state until the nineteenth century. During this period the understanding of the Church as a well organized institution, hierarchically orderly and centrally managed, prevailed. It exaggerated its temporal and juridical aspects. This does not mean that an invisible or eschatological dimension was observed at all. By making efforts to move away from ecclesiastical institutionalism, post-conciliar ecclesiology has referred to such biblical and patristic categories as the People of God, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the house of God and the mystical body of Christ. In addition to not degrading the above categories, it introduced two further ones: the basic sacrament and *communio*².

Already in the first issue of the Constitution on the Church of *Lumen gentium* the Council Fathers concluded that “the Church is in Christ as a sacrament, a sign and instrument of internal union with God and the unity of the whole human race”. Similarly it introduced a vision of the Church which goes out into the world and which is fulfilled in the world. The community of believers in Christ cannot be closed. It only fulfills its mission when it performs the *diaconia* (ministry of love), *martyria* (witness), and liturgy (worship) for itself (auto-evangelization) and for the world (evangelization). Thus the

² C.f. A. Napiórkowski, *Bosko-ludzka wspólnota. Zarys katolickiej eklezjologii integralnej*, Kraków 2010, p. 153–204.

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Church can never cease to be missionary, for mission belongs to its very nature.³ The Church, in imitation of Christ, is therefore called to give people of all times and every geographical location the fruits of redemption. “Thus, the Church, although it needs human resources to carry out its mission, is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, even by its own example, humility and self-sacrifice. Christ was sent by the Father “to bring good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart”, “to seek and to save what was lost”. Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder. It does all it can to relieve their need and in them it strives to serve Christ”.⁴

Although still today after twenty centuries not everyone belongs to the Church’s of its existence, and sometimes only a small flock, it is nonetheless “a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race.”⁵ Hence it carries the gifts of redemption not only to the followers of Christ but to all people who are God’s creation and children of the Heavenly Father. Sin touches everyone – both those outside and within the Church, for it is part of human nature. That is why we rightly speak of “the holy Church of sinners”. “Holy” – because of Christ and the saints in Him. “Sinners” – because we are in it, people who need salvation. Jesus explicitly declares: “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mt 9: 10–13). This reveals the nature and mission of the Church, which is sent not only to those who believe in Christ, but

³ Vatican Council II, *Ad gentes* nr 6: “Missions” is the term usually given to those particular undertakings by which the heralds of the Gospel, sent out by the Church and going forth into the whole world, carry out the task of preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ.

⁴ CC 8.

⁵ C.f. CC 9.

also to those who do not yet recognize him as their Savior. Jesus' redemptive goodness stretches over all creation; everything that is the work of the Creator's hand. No one and nothing is excluded from the benevolent and animating work of God unless He himself excludes them. Just as God the Father created everything, so Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit redeemed everything. Hence all people have the opportunity to participate in the spiritual goods flowing from the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Even more: everyone needs the light of the Gospel on the path of his earthly life. "At all times and in every race God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right. God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness".⁶

Therefore, the community of the Church – having within it the richness of the evangelical doctrine one that she has not intellectually worked out or invented, but which it has been handed down by the Triune God – is obliged to share this goodness with the whole world. Although there are some elements of truth, good and beautiful in the world, they are not present in their fullness nor are they sufficiently recognized. Faithful to its mission, from its inception the Church goes out to the world with God's word and proposes it the freedom and truth it has itself experienced. "What was from the beginning is what we have heard and seen with our own eyes, what we have seen and what our hands have touched, so we declare to you that you also have fellowship with us" (1 J 1:3). The apostolic community with St. Peter and Paul at its head did not tire in proclaiming the Good News. The Apostle of the nations wrote: "Woe to me if I did not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16). Thus,

⁶ CC 9.

over the course of the history of the Church, God calls outstanding people who are endowed with a special insight into the faith and holiness, who rediscover new truths in Christian Revelation and offer them to the ecclesial community as well as to the world. By remaining in the Holy Spirit, these teachers of the faith, astutely discern certain elements of Revelation and profess them in the language of their epoch. The holiness of their life and the depth of teaching become a model for future generations of Christians.

To date there are 35 Doctors of the Church. The last two received this title in 2012 from Benedict XVI, who desired to show believers and the world alike these wise and eminent figures. By proclaiming St. John of Avila (1500–1569) and Bl. Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) new Doctors of the Church, the Pope revealed to us two extraordinary seekers of truth who inspire us to new and original ways of knowing and understanding the mystery of God, man and the world. The world always needs reliable teachers. The authentic renewal of the Church and of the world is born of holiness and spiritual development. It is worth noting that a fourth woman (Hildegard of Bingen) was added to the three existing female Doctors of the Church (Teresa of Ávila, Catherine of Siena and Therese of the Child Jesus), which proves the existence of responsible and unconventional female theologians. While all missionaries and priests could look to the example of St. John of Ávila who reminds us of the original zeal in proclaiming the Gospel.

3. How to understand the modern world?

Unfortunately, we still see that many in the contemporary world demonize the Church's mission and preaching. Occasionally, this even reverberates with a neo-Platonic or Manichean mentality. As history repeats itself, the Gnostic approach believes in a dualism of the spiritual (angelic and good) and material (evil and sinful). Of course, believers often see the evil-doings of the non-believers

and they experience enormous persecution for their faith in Christ even to the point of martyrdom. The Church's denial of the world is also due to the lack of distinction between secularism and secularization.⁷ Despite the mighty conciliar renewal and the openness of the Church, it seems correct to show the limits of dialogue so as not to lose one's own identity.⁸

It is therefore makes sense to present the correct picture of the world in post-conciliar theology. The basis of a proper understanding of the world is first to be found in the Scriptures. The term "world" is not unambiguous in the Bible. It has at least three different meanings: first, the "world" understood as the work of the Creator and the place of salvation, second, the neutral meaning of what is external to the Church and third, the "world" as synonymous with sin and destruction. That is why the Church has a duty to discern "the spirits of the world": to discover what is good and beautiful and to warn against the unholy and destructive.

According to Scripture the world is the cosmos or the whole of creation. The Triune God not only created the universe, whose main figure remains man, but he continually creates it (*continua creatio*). In his Providence he maintains its existence. Then mankind, who opposed God, is fully subservient to the plan of salvation and redeemed by Christ. And although not everyone accepts Christ as their Savior, they can bear witness to God's creative goodness and love. It follows that the world is closely connected with the Christian history of salvation and receives its proper religious meaning. Therefore, it is wrong to practice 'a theology of rejection', which in the pre-conciliar period was often quite evident. The world is for man the place where he is challenged and where he can be fulfilled. "God blessed them, saying to them", Be fruitful and multiply, that

⁷ C.f. A. Napiórkowski, *Współczesny sekularyzm a teologia sekularyzacji jako wyzwania wiary*, "Teologia Praktyczna", v. 14 (2013), p. 17–39.

⁸ C.f. J. Ratzinger, *Granice dialogu*, Kraków 2000, ss. 139.

you may populate the land, and subdue it “(Gen 1:28). In the New Testament, the definition of the world also extended to that which is under the temporal dominion of Satan, as manifested by man’s revolt against God (cf. Jn 3: 18; 7; 7; 15; 18; 17; 9). However, God the Father loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son (cf. Jn 3:16). The death of Christ on the cross is the hour of judgment over the world.⁹

A significant breakthrough in the approach of the Church to the world came with the development of the so-called theology of earthly realities, which was primarily the achievement of Francophone theologians (Gustave Thils, Jean Yves Jolif, Christian Duquoc, Romano Guardini, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jacques Maritain, Yves Congar).¹⁰

In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world the Second Vatican Council finally appreciated the autonomy of the world and both discovered and accepted the presence of Christians in the secular world.

In this document we find definitions of the concept of absolute autonomy and relative autonomy. Absolute independence means a world independent of God, while relative independence means the world and man identified in relation to God as Creator and Savior. The autonomy of earthly realities cannot be absolute, because it must respect the moral law¹¹ and recognize God as the beginning and end of all things.¹²

Unlike absolute autonomy (a world independent of God), relative autonomy regards God as the Creator and Christ as its Head

⁹ C.f. W. Matusiak, *Świat*, w: *Leksykon Teologii Fundamentalnej*, red. M. Rusecki, K. Kaucha, I. S. Ledwoń, J. Mastej, Lublin – Kraków 2002, p. 1193–1194.

¹⁰ C.f. M. Graczyk, *Francuska teologia rzeczywistości ziemskich. Próba retrospekcji i reinterpretacji*, Warszawa 1992, ss. 579.

¹¹ C.f. *Gaudium et Spes* 36.

¹² C.f. *Ibid*, 20.

and the world gains its transcendent definition through the mystery of Creation and the mystery of Christ. Secularity thus understood is something different from atheism. The basic principle of secularity is contained in the Scriptures: "All things are yours whether.... the world or life or death, or the present or the future, — all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God" (1 Cor 3: 22).

Although *Gaudium et spes* did not use the term secularization, it has shaped the way of thinking about the relative autonomy of temporal reality, which can be interpreted as a theological equivalent of the concept of secularization. In conciliar teaching, the world and the Church must enjoy their own autonomy. According to the natural order of things, man is entitled to sovereignty. The Church only reserves for itself a say in the field of morality. The documents of the Second Vatican Council, speak of the just autonomy of temporal reality which concerns man: society, science¹³, politics¹⁴, and culture¹⁵ are all within its legitimate scope. The autonomy of earthly realities is not absolute, but must occur with the recognition of God as the source and end of all things¹⁶. This means the norms of God's law¹⁷ must be accepted and moral principles¹⁸ respected. The Council contrasts secularization with the process of sanctification, which does not destroy the legitimate autonomy of earthly realities, but restores them to their proper place and recognizes God as the purpose of all things.

The world is not evil or a rival to the Church. The world is above all God's creation. It is also the place of Judeo-Christian

¹³ C.f. Ibid, 36.

¹⁴ C.f. Ibid, 76.

¹⁵ C.f. Ibid, 56.

¹⁶ C.f. Ibid, 20.

¹⁷ C.f. Ibid, 41.

¹⁸ C.f. Ibid, 36.

revelation. The world is also a stage on which the drama of salvation is played out: a tense dialogue between the gift of God's love and the human freedom. All people with their different conditions of time and space, history and culture are the subjects of the absolute love of God. The world is not only created by God, but also redeemed by Him. So man was called into existence so that he could meet the Triune God. Therefore, proclaiming the greatest vocation of man, the Council that "offers to mankind the honest assistance of the Church in fostering that brotherhood of all men which corresponds to this destiny of theirs. Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served"¹⁹.

Mutual respect for the autonomy and goals of the world and of the Church has can be summarized in the following formulation of the Council: "If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. Such is not merely required by modern man, but harmonizes also with the will of the Creator. For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts. Therefore if methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God. Indeed whoever labors to penetrate the secrets of reality

¹⁹ Ibid 3.

with a humble and steady mind, even though he is unaware of the fact, is nevertheless being led by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence, and gives them their identity. Consequently, we cannot but deplore certain habits of mind, which are sometimes found too among Christians, which do not sufficiently attend to the rightful independence of science and which, from the arguments and controversies they spark, lead many minds to conclude that faith and science are mutually opposed. But if the expression, the independence of temporal affairs, is taken to mean that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator, anyone who acknowledges God will see how false such a meaning is. For without the Creator the creature would disappear. For their part, however, all believers of whatever religion always hear His revealing voice in the discourse of creatures. When God is forgotten, however, the creature itself grows unintelligible”.²⁰

There is no competition between a Church which defines itself in this way and the world. Instead there is mutual interplay between two realms which have their own distinct autonomy and purpose. This applies not only to the relationship between the Church to the world but also to specific issues such as marriage and family, culture, socio-economic life, politics and international relations.²¹

Protestant theology on secularization with its understanding of the relative autonomy of the world has provided inspiration for the Catholic reflection on the matter. Without using the term secularization explicitly, the Council Fathers were unambiguously for retaining the secularity and autonomy of the world. Earthly realities are entitled to their own sovereignty and self-determination. Man and the world should enjoy freedom. *Gaudium et spes* uncovers the concept of absolute and relative autonomy. Absolute autonomy

²⁰ Ibid, 36.

²¹ C.f. Ibid, 46–90; C.f. W. Matusiak, *Świat*, s. 1195.

means a world totally independent of God, while relative autonomy means man and the world are identified in relation to God as Creator and Savior. It should be noted that from a Catholic point of view, the autonomy of earthly realities cannot be absolute, since it must be carried out with respect for moral norms²², with the recognition of God as the source and purpose of all things.²³

4. The world without transcendence and the Church without the world?

According to the aforementioned view, it is impossible to build a world conducive to humanity or even to live and create without a transcendental point of reference. Similarly, it is impossible for the Church to focus on itself without reference to the world. It is difficult to imagine a world that could function properly without God, or of a Church that was separated from the world and its secularity. After all, they serve the good of the human person in order to develop a space of freedom, truth and goodness, though spiritual, cultural and material means. So the world and the Church cannot live in isolation but rather must support one another.

Contemporary art is a good example of just how much the world needs the Gospel message, which is to be found in the Church. The absence of transcendent references is fatally reflected in its present condition. It is enough to walk through the halls of the admittedly interesting collection of the *Moderne Museet* in Stockholm – considered one of the best collections of contemporary art in the world. Although it is not the largest in terms of exhibit space or number of the famous works, it exemplifies 20th century paintings very well. Expressionism, cubism, futurism, Russian avant-

²² C.f. *Gaudium et spes* 36.

²³ C.f. *Ibid*, 20; C.f. A. Napiórkowski, *Reforma i rozwój Kościoła*, Kraków 2012, p. 158–166.

gardism, Dadaism, surrealism and pop art are all attempts to find a new language for new times. These directions attempt to work out new forms of expressing what it means to be a human in this rapidly changing world. The aforementioned styles in the Swedish museum can be seen in the most important works, which present their own particular histories, passion and energy. A visitor who leaves the *Moderna Museet* and many other similar collections of contemporary art in the world, feels drawn into a kind of vortex. Casting aside the Absolute, abandoning nature and subjectively focusing on man alone, does not encourage or inspire the 21st century visitor. Art is just one of the many manifestations of human activity, where we see an urgent need for transcendent references. Great works of art are born when the artist transcends himself spiritually and touches the mystery of the First Creator, enticing the viewer to contemplate and delight and urging him towards the Good and the True.

The misery of a world which removes the natural law and transcendence is even more clearly seen when analyzing the moral aspects of human action. Axiology is permanently inscribed in human nature. It is impossible to live a happy life without moral values. Man needs morality. Expressive moral standards are indispensable not only in one's individual life, but even more in social life. Christian faith includes morality, which provides not only an abstract ideal but offers concrete practical indications. Already in antiquity, Christians distinguished themselves from others by their morality. A Christianity, which only spoke of the ideals of the ancient Greece or Rome, would not be new. It certainly would not be the teaching of Jesus Christ. By increasingly exploring the Gospel, the Church must constantly make visible the moral content of faith. Today, more than ever, moral questions become a necessary condition for the further development of mankind. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger noted that in our one-sided technical and scientific civilization, the ancient moral precepts upon which great cultures have relied so far, have largely been destroyed. A technocratic vision of the world detracts

its value. The question becomes always about the practical possibility and not the moral admissibility of the human act. Nowadays, it is increasingly accepted that whatever can be done practically is also permissible morally.

In his extremely important Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, which deals with some of the fundamental problems of the moral teaching of the Church, John Paul II states: “No one can escape from the fundamental questions: *What must I do? How do I distinguish good from evil?* The answer is only possible thanks to the splendor of the truth which shines forth deep within the human spirit... Consequently the decisive answer to every one of man’s questions, his religious and moral questions in particular, is given by Jesus Christ, or rather is Jesus Christ himself, as the Second Vatican Council recalls”.²⁴ In this significant document by analyzing some of the fundamental problems of the Church’s moral teaching, the Pope not only recalled that “*on the path of the moral life the way of salvation is open to all*”²⁵, but also showed the essence of the cultural question, which is a sense of morality. Faced with formidable forms of social and economic injustice and political corruption, this gives a clear answer to “*the need for a radical personal and social renewal capable of ensuring justice, solidarity, honesty and openness.*”²⁶

Today it is almost unheard of that technical development goes hand in hand with spiritual development. It seems that the blame for this should be appointed both the Church and the world. Is it not time that, after these two painful and difficult centuries of artificial separation, of course still respecting the hard fought independence and autonomy, there should be a joint effort is not so much a “government of souls” to offer and authentic service to disillusioned modern man? Both camps need the spirituality that

²⁴ VS 2.

²⁵ VS 3.

²⁶ VS 98.

is embodied in the saints. Only a high moral standard is able to save the world from destruction and to ensure the development and continuous reform of the Church. With good reason we associate the sanctity of life with original knowledge and the designation of new routes for modern man. This is the model of the doctors of the Church. In the sanctity of their lives we can often find unusual and interesting pedagogical threads. Only saints become authentic teachers for the Church and the world.

Should St. Faustina and St. John Paul II be announced Doctors of the Church? They both clearly meet the necessary requirements. Their lives exemplify a constant spiritual bond with God. They were first made blessed, which showed how they were revered by the local Church. However, their teaching and widespread worship encompassed the universal Church, which was confirmed by the miracles which they fulfilled through God. For this reason they were declared saints. Their discovery of God in the mystery of His mercy was unconventional and innovative. They pointed to the breathtaking possibilities of human freedom, which are found in the trust of the risen Jesus. The richness of the teaching of a simple nun and a philosopher pope goes beyond what can be written in a single study. They have shown the world and the Church new paths to our loving Heavenly Father.

A List of Doctors of the Church

The title of Doctor of the Catholic Church defines those saints who have made a significant contribution to deepening the understanding of the mystery of God and enriching the Christian experience. The Church's theological doctrine is rooted in the truth revealed through Scripture and Tradition. This truth helps illuminate the incomprehensible content of Revelation, more fully understand the dogmas of faith, and dispel doubts about them.

The 8th century saint Bede the Venerable (also proclaimed Doctor of the Church in 1899) was the first one to hand over a list of generally recognized Church doctors. It includes the following saints (in the parentheses the year of their recognition): St. Ambrose (1295), St. Augustine (1295), St. Jerome (1295), St. Gregory the Great (1295). They were joined by the four doctors of the Eastern Church: Saint Basil the Great (1568), Saint Gregory of Nazianzus (1568), Saint John Chrysostom (1568) and Saint Athanasius the Great (1568). In the Middle Ages: St. Thomas Aquinas (1567), Saint Bonaventure (1588). In the sixteenth century, Pope Pius V extended the entire liturgy to the whole Church, referring to the celebration of the feast days of the saints. In 1970, Pope Paul VI granted the title of Doctor of the Church to two women: Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Teresa of Ávila (1970). John Paul II granted it to

Will St. Faustina and St. John Paul II become Doctors of the Church?

Saint Teresa of Lisieux (1997), and Benedict XVI in 2012, to Saint Hildegard of Bingen and St. John of Avila.

In 2000 the list of Church doctors was thirty-three.

The other Doctors of the Church not mentioned above are Anselm of Canterbury (1720), Isidor of Seville (1722), Peter Chrysologus (1729), Leon the Great (1754), Pierre Damiani (1828), Bernard of Clairvaux (1830), Hilary of Poitier (1851) Alfonso of Liguori (1871), Francis de Sales (1877), Cyril of Jerusalem (1882), Cyril of Alexandria (1882), John of Damascus (1890), Ephraim the Syrian (1920), Peter Canisius (1925), Robert Bellarmine (1931), Albert the Great (1931), Anthony of Padua (1956) and Lawrence of Brindisi (1959).