



PRZEMYŚŁAW SAWA

University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5634-3078>

## Challenges Facing the Church in Europe Insights from the Teaching of John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis

**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to provide the main indications for a renewal of the Catholic Church in Europe in the face of contemporary challenges, both internal (e.g. community crisis, neglect of evangelisation, insufficient catechisation, secularisation, insufficient involvement of the laity) and external (e.g. general crisis of religiousness, individualisation of life). The source material is the teaching of John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis, who can be described as the “popes of the new evangelisation.” Basically, this article analyses certain official documents of the Bishops of Rome and selected, due to their number, official homilies and speeches.

The analysis of the texts leads to the following conclusions: there is a need for evangelisation leading to a personal decision on faith, catechisation and multidimensional formation, a renewal of spirituality, a deepening of the ecclesial self-awareness of the faithful, and the Church’s involvement in world affairs (ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, human brotherhood, addressing social issues, articulating the truth about marriage and the family, help in solving migration problems and care for the environment).

**Keywords:** Catholic Church, Europe, evangelisation, catechesis and formation, spirituality, ecclesiology, unity, dialogue, brotherhood, ecology

### Introduction

In a time of social and cultural transformation, or even a change of an era, the Church is facing various challenges. On the one hand, there is a crisis inside of it (caused by credibility issues arising from the scandals,

a decline in attendance at liturgy, growing number of people leaving the Church, increasing secularisation, or the lack of proper formation of the faithful). At the same time, Europe is confronted with important problems, such as cutting off its roots of identity, individualisation of life, and social, migration and environmental crises. This must not act as discouragement though. Speaking about the Synod of Bishops on Europe, John Paul II said: “With a *loving gaze* the participants in the Synod did not hesitate to look at *the present reality of the Continent*, noting both its light and its shadows. There was a clear recognition that the current situation is marked by grave uncertainties at the levels of culture, anthropology, ethics and spirituality.”<sup>1</sup> What is necessary, however, is the right perspective of reflection — only hope gives real meaning to life. This is the key to interpreting the world: “[...] to approach human situations and events with an attitude of fundamental trust, born of faith in the Risen One, present and at work in history.”<sup>2</sup> This resonates with Francis’ thought: “Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onwards!”<sup>3</sup>

Keeping all this in mind, one must be aware of the Church’s continuing significance in Europe. However, it must be properly renewed and must participate in the lives of Europeans. Therefore, five basic challenges for the Catholic community can be formulated. The source is the teaching of John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis, including in particular their official documents and some of the numerous written texts, homilies and speeches. Understanding the thoughts of the successive Bishops of Rome is valuable, as it may show the continuity of the main line of their teaching, despite evident different sensitivities and styles of ministry. The continuity can in particular be seen in their teaching about the spiritual dimension of Christian life, the Church’s ongoing renewal and its effective presence in the world.

## 1. Evangelisation

Evangelisation is a fundamental challenge for the Church in Europe. John Paul II and Benedict XVI used the term “new evangelisation,” which

---

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Ecclesia in Europa”* [hereinafter: EE], no. 3.

<sup>2</sup> EE, no. 5.

<sup>3</sup> FRANCIS: *Apostolic Exhortation “Evangelii gaudium”* [hereinafter: EG], no. 3.

is best defined as preaching with new ardour, using new methods and with new expressions.<sup>4</sup> This is in line in with what Pope John XXIII called for in his opening speech to the Second Vatican Council when he said that doctrine must be expressed according to the demands of the times.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, evangelisation cannot be seen as synonymous only with pastoral care or reaching out to non-believers. In his message concluding the 13th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Benedict XVI focused on the specifics of the new evangelisation: in relation to ordinary pastoral work, it is about giving new fire of the Holy Spirit to the faithful, helping those who were baptised but are not living a Christian life to encounter Christ again, discovering the joy of faith and returning to the Church, and bearing witness of the source of life's meaning and happiness to the seekers.<sup>6</sup> Evangelisation may also be seen as efforts to strengthen believers through the kerygma and to newly proclaim the Gospel in secularised countries.<sup>7</sup>

Europe needs such evangelisation. Some of the reasons are religious indifference, people's ignorance of Christ, the secularisation of Christians and the increase in the number of the unbaptised.<sup>8</sup> The first and foremost challenge is therefore to regain the enthusiasm to preach. It is not, of course, about new methods only, although these too are necessary in the changing world, but it is about preaching with a heart filled with God's love. This involves the formation of evangelisers and, before that, the awakening of a missionary spirit among the baptised.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, a correction of religious language is necessary; Congregation for the Clergy said that "certain contexts are impervious to the positive Christian

<sup>4</sup> JOHN PAUL II: *Discorso all'Assemblea del CELAM* [9.03.1983], III.

<sup>5</sup> "[...] occorre che questa dottrina certa ed immutabile, alla quale si deve prestare un assenso fedele, sia approfondita ed esposta secondo quanto è richiesto dai nostri tempi. Altro è infatti il deposito della Fede, cioè le verità che sono contenute nella nostra veneranda dottrina, altro è il modo con il quale esse sono annunziate, sempre però nello stesso senso e nella stessa accezione." JOHN XXIII: *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*. In: PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO PER LA PROMOZIONE DELLA NUOVA EVANGELIZZAZIONE: *Enchiridion della Nuova Evangelizzazione. Testi del Magistero pontificio e conciliare 1939—2012*. Vaticano 2012, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> BENEDICT XVI: *Homily. Holy Mass for the closing of the Synod of Bishops* [28.10.2012].

<sup>7</sup> Cf. BENEDICT XVI: *Homily. First Vespers of Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul* [28.06.2010].

<sup>8</sup> See EE, no. 27. "In various parts of Europe a first proclamation of the Gospel is needed: the number of the unbaptized is growing, both because of the significant presence of immigrants of other religions and because children born into families of Christian tradition have not received Baptism, either as a result of the Communist domination or the spread of religious indifference." EE, no. 46.

<sup>9</sup> EE, nos. 45—49.

sense of terms such as original sin and its consequences, redemption, the cross, the need for prayer, voluntary sacrifice, chastity, sobriety, obedience, humility, penance, poverty, etc.”<sup>10</sup> This is due to the lack of a real relationship with Christ, knowledge of the faith or interest in it. In this case, the testimony and holiness of believers and their presence in people’s lives are crucial.

It is not enough to merely proclaim the truths of the faith and celebrate it in the sacraments. What is also necessary for the renewal of the Church is the formation of the faithful so that they can move from a faith acquired and sustained by tradition to a personal and mature faith that grows out of experience and conviction. At the service of such formation are catechesis, spiritual direction, the rediscovery of the value of theology, the evangelisation of culture and the inculturation of the Gospel, the work of Catholic schools and universities as well as theological faculties in state universities, and pastoral care. Another necessary thing in the modern world is to discover the importance of the mass media.<sup>11</sup> However, the focus should not be on doctrine and morals but on the personal act of faith and the choice of Jesus Christ as Lord, like Benedict XVI said: “[...] being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”<sup>12</sup> Obviously, this cannot be reduced to emotions only. It seems appropriate to describe this reality using the category of experience rather than only a feeling. This may lead to stronger faith and missionary zeal.<sup>13</sup> This can clearly be seen in the history of the Church, for example in Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Jesus, John of the Cross, Ignatius Loyola, John Wesley or representatives of various waves of charismatic awakenings.<sup>14</sup>

The importance of evangelisation is emphasised by the structural measures taken. In 2010, Benedict XVI established the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. Among its objectives were: to promote the new evangelisation, its forms and methods, to serve the particular Churches, the examine in depth the theological and pastoral mean-

<sup>10</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY: *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium. Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community*, no. 1.

<sup>11</sup> See EE, nos. 49–52, 58–63.

<sup>12</sup> BENEDICT XVI: *Encyclical Letter “Deus caritas est”*, no. 1.

<sup>13</sup> “St. Stephen is a model for all who wish to put themselves at the service of the new evangelization. He shows that the newness of the proclamation does not consist primarily in the use of original methods or techniques — which of course, have their usefulness — but rather in being filled with the Holy Spirit and letting ourselves be guided by him.” BENEDICT XVI: *Angelus* [26.12.2012].

<sup>14</sup> See *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901–2001*. Ed. V. SYNAN. Nashville, Tennessee 2012.

ing of the new evangelisation, to promote and to foster the study of the Papal Magisterium related to the new evangelisation, to make known and to support initiatives linked to the new evangelisation, to study and to encourage the use of modern forms of communication, and to promote the use of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>15</sup> In 2013, the task of catechesis and the International Council for Catechesis were included in the scope of the Papal Council's responsibilities.<sup>16</sup> This has to be read as setting a clear course of action: we cannot focus on knowledge alone, but we also need a kerygmatic permeation of pastoral work. Faith, which is aroused and ignited by the proclamation of evangelisation, must be deepened by a sound and multidimensional catechesis.<sup>17</sup>

Evangelisation was further prioritised by Pope Francis, when he said: "I dream of a *missionary option*, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything."<sup>18</sup> In the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, which reforms the Roman Curia, he established the Dicastery for Evangelization, which is presided over by the Bishop of Rome and which is composed of two sections: the Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World and the Section for the First Evangelization and New Particular Churches, each directed by a Pro-Prefect. Then there is the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for the Service of Charity.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Integral formation

Evangelisation naturally demands a continuation in catechesis,<sup>20</sup> namely, a systematic teaching of the truths of the faith. Its aim is not

<sup>15</sup> BENEDICT XVI: *Apostolic Letter "Ubicumque et semper"*, Art. 4.

<sup>16</sup> BENEDICT XVI: *Apostolic Letter "Fides per doctrinam"*, Arts. 1—2.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. PAUL VI: *Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii nuntiandi"*, no. 44: "[...] a means of evangelization that must not be neglected is that of catechetical instruction. The intelligence, especially that of children and young people, needs to learn through systematic religious instruction the fundamental teachings, the living content of the truth which God has wished to convey to us and which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion during the course of her long history."

<sup>18</sup> EG, no. 27.

<sup>19</sup> FRANCIS: *Apostolic Constitution "Praedicate Evangelium"*, Arts. 53—81.

<sup>20</sup> A distinction must therefore be made between kerygmatic or evangelising preaching, the aim of which is to lead to a personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and start of a new life, and catechetical preaching, which is to help learn about the Christian doctrine, worship and morals and the life of the Church.

only to acquire theological knowledge, but to undergo a multifaceted, systematic and integral formation, which, in addition to knowledge, requires worship and growth in spiritual and moral life.<sup>21</sup> In this way, believers identify themselves with the Church and acquire the capacity to have a connection with the Church. At the same time, a sound formation of believers will enable them to participate constructively in social life and in various discussions about worldview, religion and other matters. This is in line with the diagnosis made by Paul VI: “If development calls for an ever-growing number of technical experts, even more necessary still is the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism, one which will enable our contemporaries to enjoy the higher values of love and friendship, of prayer and contemplation, and thus find themselves.”<sup>22</sup> In this context, the importance of theology is non-negotiable. The International Theological Commission said that “occasions for inter-disciplinary encounter and exchange between theologians and philosophers, natural and social scientists, historians, and so on, should also be fostered, since, as is indicated in this report, theology is a science that thrives in interaction with other sciences, as they do also in fruitful exchange with theology.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, theology cannot be treated merely as a part of the Church’s inner matters, but also as a way for the Church to participate in the discourses of the world. In this way, theology is part of evangelisation.<sup>24</sup>

The rationale for undertaking catechisation is also to correct some misconceptions present among the faithful, such as belittling the institutionality of the Church, equating the ministerial priesthood with the baptismal priesthood of the faithful, misunderstanding the sacraments and sacramentals, selective application of the doctrine, misunderstanding of private revelations, exaggerated veneration of the saints, superstitious

<sup>21</sup> Formation is “a continual process in the individual of maturation in faith and a likening to Christ, according to the will of the Father, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” JOHN PAUL II: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Christifideles laici”* [hereinafter: ChL], no. 57. An important hint can also be found in St. Francis’ *Letter to friar Anthony*: “It pleases me that you would teach sacred theology to the friars, so long as in the study of this you do not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion, just as it says in the Rule.” FRANCIS OF ASSISI: *Letter to friar Anthony*. Trans. Fr. K. ESSER, O.F.M., <https://www.liturgies.net/saints/francis/writings.htm#Antonium> [accessed 3.05.2024].

<sup>22</sup> PAUL VI: *Encyclical Letter “Populorum progressio”*, no. 20.

<sup>23</sup> INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION: *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*, no. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. FRANCIS: *Apostolic Constitution “Veritatis gaudium”*, no. 3: “[...] the worldwide network of ecclesiastical universities and faculties is called to offer the decisive contribution of leaven, salt and light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the living Tradition of the Church, which is ever open to new situations and ideas.”

faith, the primacy of freedom without values, situational ethics, new concepts of morality of sexual life, or reducing the Church's mission to the horizontal dimension only. There are also issues which may threaten the unity of the Church, such as questioning of Pope Francis' teaching and decisions, the rulings of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar magisterium, as well as directions of spirituality or pastoral practices adequate to the challenges of today. The problem is growing particularly with people's increasing involvement in social media, where many users publish non-substantive content. This encourages antagonisms within Catholic circles and the creation of an exclusivist mentality.

These goals can only be reached if the contemporary Church properly works on the homilies, catechesis, communities and movements, as channels of formation. The primary place where formation is offered is the homily delivered during the Eucharist, the liturgy of the other sacraments or the liturgy of the hours. However, care must be taken to ensure that this part of the celebration does not take the form of a university or popularising lecture. The homily should be an encounter with the living God, who comes to the participants of the liturgy and transforms them internally, leading to new life after the celebration. It should also be linked to the liturgical rites, giving it meaning and arousing new enthusiasm.<sup>25</sup> The purely catechismic model should be abandoned then and kerygmatic and mystagogical ones should be used instead. Pope Francis put it in simple terms: "We must not think that in catechesis the kerygma gives way to a supposedly more *solid* formation. Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma, which is reflected in and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats."<sup>26</sup> When doctrinal and moral content is presented, it is necessary to start from the word of God and the inner experience of the preacher and the listeners. The experience of the whole Church is also important: "To speak from the heart means that our hearts must not just be on fire, but also enlightened by the fullness of revelation and by the path travelled by God's word in the heart of the Church and our faithful people throughout history."<sup>27</sup> Keeping all this in mind, it is important to take care that the proclamation of the word during the liturgy is living and Christocentric and that it shows how the word of God

<sup>25</sup> See EG, nos. 135—159. "The homily can actually be an intense and happy experience of the Spirit, a consoling encounter with God's word, a constant source of renewal and growth." EG, no. 135.

<sup>26</sup> EG, no. 165.

<sup>27</sup> EG, no. 144.

is true for various celebrations and situations of life. It is worth pointing out that many years ago research of the processes of conversion from Catholicism to various evangelical communities in Latin America showed that people wanted to hear of the relationship between the Bible and life (rather than be given purely theological preaching) and expected to hear about what God is doing here and now, a true testimony encouraging them to participate in the life of the community and its mission.<sup>28</sup>

The second dimension of formation is multidimensional catechesis for adults, encompassing the spirit, the intellect and the volition. It seeks to foster integral growth in faith and identification with the teaching, life and mission of the Church. Faith, by its very nature, presupposes a process of gradual initiation to give the baptised a stable basis for life — “faith sees to the extent that it journeys, to the extent that it chooses to enter into the horizons opened up by God’s word.”<sup>29</sup>

A third way of forming the faithful is through Catholic communities, movements and associations. Their importance is highlighted by the teaching of the “popes of the new evangelisation.” John Paul II valued various forms of gathering, formation and commitment of the baptised, as they helped people to live according to the Gospel, were a cradle of various vocations, promoted the vocation of the laity, fostered holiness, encouraged participation in evangelisation and ecumenism and helped counteract the impact of various destructive groups.<sup>30</sup> In particular, these communities are schools of prayer and spiritual life.<sup>31</sup> They are a hope for

<sup>28</sup> “Sekty albo nowe ruchy religijne. Wyzwanie duszpasterskie.” *L’Osservatore Romano* (Polish edition) 79/7 (1986), pp. 3—5; O. D. SANTAGADA: “Charakterystyka oraz sytuacja sekt i niezależnych grup religijnych.” In: O. D. SANTAGADA, E. BRAVO et al.: *Wspólnoty kościelne, niezależne grupy religijne, sekty na przykładzie Ameryki Łacińskiej*. Trans. A. KAJZEREK. Warszawa 1995, pp. 17—25. Cf. P. SAWA: “Is That a Really New Spirituality? Basics and Signs of the Spirituality of the New Evangelization — the Case of Poland.” *Ecumeny and Law* 5 (2017), pp. 95—123.

<sup>29</sup> FRANCIS: *Encyclical Letter “Lumen fidei”*, no. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. EE, no. 16: “[...] groups, in fact, help Christians to live a more radically evangelical life. They are a cradle for different vocations, and they generate new forms of consecration. [...] they promote the vocation of the laity, and they help it to find expression in different spheres of life. They favour the holiness of the people. They are able to be both the messenger and the message for people who otherwise would not encounter the Church. Frequently they promote the journey of ecumenism and they open the ways to interreligious dialogue. They are an antidote to the spread of sects and an invaluable aid to the spread of joy and life in the Church.”

<sup>31</sup> “[...] our Christian communities must become genuine *schools* of prayer, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly *falls in love*.” JOHN PAUL II: *Apostolic Letter “Novo millennio ineunte”* [hereinafter: NMI], no. 33.

the Church's ongoing renewal and the freedom aroused by the Holy Spirit.<sup>32</sup> Benedict XVI emphasised the importance of mystagogy, which is crucial for a conscious faith and which requires that teaching be linked with celebration.<sup>33</sup> The new ecclesial movements should also be seen as a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a source of the life of the Church. The communities should be properly run and should remain in unity with the Church by following the correct doctrine, staying in unity with bishops,<sup>34</sup> as well as by respecting and working together with other the communities.<sup>35</sup> Only then can they be a real force promoting evangelisation and the search for new forms of spreading the faith.<sup>36</sup> As called for by Francis, it is important that the communities are integrated with the whole Church by joining in the work of the dioceses or parishes.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Renewal of spirituality

Another challenge for the Church in Europe, beside evangelisation and formation, is a spiritual renewal by developing the inner life of the

<sup>32</sup> Groups are "a sign of the freedom of forms in which the one Church is expressed, and they represent a sound newness, which still waits to be adequately understood in all its positive effectiveness for the kingdom of God at work in the present moment of history." JOHN PAUL II: *General audience* [25.11.1998].

<sup>33</sup> "[...] the Synod Fathers called for greater involvement by communities of consecrated life, movements and groups which, by their specific charisms, can give new impetus to Christian formation." BENEDICT XVI: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Sacramentum caritatis"*, no. 64.

<sup>34</sup> "[...] the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities [...] constitute a unique gift of the Lord and a precious resource for the life of the Church. They should be accepted with trust and valued for the various contributions they place at the service of the common benefit in an ordered and fruitful way." BENEDICT XVI: *Address to Participants in a meeting organized by the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships* [31.10.2008].

<sup>35</sup> "Pastors also need to have a lively contact with the various apostolic communities [...]. Nor can they forget the need for collaboration among the communities themselves. There should never be rivalry between them but rather, a reciprocal and cordial complementarity in dealing with apostolic tasks." BENEDICT XVI: *Address to the third group of Bishops from Poland on their "Ad Limina" visit* [17.12.2005].

<sup>36</sup> BENEDICT XVI: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Verbum Domini"* [hereinafter: VD], no. 94. For the theology, history and significance of ecclesial movements in the structure of the Church, see J. RATZINGER: *Kościół. Pielgrzymująca wspólnota wiary*. Eds. S. O. HORN, V. PFENÜR. Trans. W. SZYMONA. Kraków 2005, pp. 159—188; IDEM: *Nowe porywy Ducha. Ruchy odnowy w Kościele*. Trans. S. CZERWIK, Kielce 2006.

<sup>37</sup> EG, no. 29.

baptised. On the other hand, what is needed is for people to see how important spirituality is. For in every human being there is a longing for transcendence, that is, for going beyond oneself and the sensual, material and temporary world, although this is not always understood as a religious need. John Paul II was right to say that “in today’s world, despite widespread secularization, there is a widespread demand for spirituality.”<sup>38</sup> Still, the challenge is to discover the multidimensional richness of Christian spirituality, which cannot be reduced to piety, liturgical life and rules of conduct only.

The starting point must be a living faith in Jesus and a personal relationship with him, a source of hope. A relationship with Jesus leads to the acceptance of the revelation of the Trinity and affects all aspects of life. Personal conversion, growing out of acceptance of Jesus the only Redeemer and His entire Gospel, is crucial. The conversion of the Church therefore begins with submitting to the word of Christ, accepting purification and making a commitment to the new reality (new evangelisation).<sup>39</sup> This involves the affirmation of a life led by the Holy Spirit, opening the man to the truth and to an authentic personal dialogue. In addition, it becomes necessary to rediscover the life of grace and to overcome the mentality of merit or various shades of Pelagianism. Pope Francis points to the danger of focusing on one’s own strengths in the spiritual and pastoral life as this may result the dissipation of man’s strengths and hinders cooperation with the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the Gospel.<sup>40</sup>

In the spiritual rebirth of the baptised, there is a need to restore the term “heart” back to its original meaning. Since the Middle Ages, in Western philosophy and theology, “heart” has been reduced to the affective dimension (feelings and emotions), which by its very nature is changeable. It cannot therefore be considered a stable foundation of the inner life. It was rather thought that reason and will should be pillars of spiritual growth. Consequently, to develop spiritually one should strive to grow in the virtues of justice, love and religiousness. Meanwhile, in the Semitic, and therefore also biblical, mentality, the heart is tantamount to the centre of physical, mental, moral and intellectual life. Eastern theology has never lost this sensibility. The Christian East sees the heart as unity of

<sup>38</sup> NMI, no. 33. It is not enough to speak only of spirituality, but it is necessary to specify whether it is Christian, Buddhist, Hindu or maybe non-theistic spirituality. See A. COMTE-SPONVILLE: *Duchowość ateistyczna. Wprowadzenie do duchowości bez Boga*. Trans. E. ADUSZKIEWICZ. Warszawa 2011; P. SAWA: “Duchowość w prowadzonym przez wiernych dialogu z ateistami, agnostykami i obojętnymi religijnie w świetle inicjatyw ‘Dziedzińca Pogan’.” *Roczniki Teologiczne* 64/5 (2017), pp. 99–123.

<sup>39</sup> See EE, nos. 14, 20, 23.

<sup>40</sup> FRANCIS: *Apostolic Exhortation “Gaudete et exsultate”*, no. 57.

the person, the continuity and diversity of life, the energy of the forces of soul and body.<sup>41</sup> Thus, by surrendering to God and giving one's heart to Him "one develops a loving attitude towards God [...]. This encompasses a whole range of thoughts, considerations, desires, wishes, joys, sorrows, fears, endearments, etc."<sup>42</sup> The spiritual life leads to a growing inner unity of man.

Spirituality is of crucial importance also to counteract the decline in the number of people regularly attending liturgy, participating in sacramental life, and identifying with the institutional Church. These are not synonymous with giving up spirituality, which does not necessarily have to take a religious form.<sup>43</sup> There is undoubtedly a growing interest in more individualistic spirituality,<sup>44</sup> often linked to some school of meditation or self-improvement methods, such as mindfulness training.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, what the Church offers in the sphere of spirituality should include meditation, even if this may raise various controversies in traditional circles. Still, non-discursive meditation, rooted in early monasticism, that can become a valuable proposal for contemporary people seeking deeper fulfilment. By cherishing their Christian roots, they can gain spiritual satisfaction, which will ultimately be a path to a renewed sacramental and liturgical life and a renewed identification with the Church. What is needed for the renewal of the Church, therefore, is a rediscovery of multiform Christian spirituality and the creation of spaces where the faithful can practise it. This also has an evangelising dimension. The various forms of spirituality, not necessarily linked to liturgy and piety, may be where religiously cold people or non-believers can be introduced to the sphere of inner experience and discovery of Jesus Christ.

The Church also needs a prayerful revival, so it can regain the dimension of mystery. This is done through individual as well as community

<sup>41</sup> See T. ŠPIDLIK: *Duchowość chrześcijańskiego Wschodu. Przewodnik systematyczny*. Trans. L. RODZIEWICZ, Kraków 2005, pp. 150—151.

<sup>42</sup> R. KOSTECKI: *Tajemnice serca*. Kraków 1982, p. 12. "The heart is the dwelling-place where I am, where I live [...]. The heart is our hidden centre, beyond the grasp of our reason and of others; only the Spirit of God can fathom the human heart and know it fully. The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives." *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2563.

<sup>43</sup> See P. KRAKOWIAK: "Religijność czy duchowość? Modlitwa czy medytacja?" In: *Jak żyć, panie doktorze? Psyche*. Eds. D. ŚLIŻ, A. MAMCARZ. Warszawa 2021, pp. 87—97.

<sup>44</sup> See R. ROLHEISER: *W poszukiwaniu duchowości XXI wieku*. Trans. L. RODZIEWICZ, Kraków 2006, pp. 56—58.

<sup>45</sup> See L. FREEMAN: *Medytacja chrześcijańska. Twoja codzienna praktyka*. Trans. A. ZIÓŁKOWSKI. Kraków 2011, see also IDEM: *Pielgrzymka wewnętrzna. Podróż medytacyjna*. Trans. A. ZIÓŁKOWSKI. Kraków 2011; S. MCKENZIE, C. HASSED: *Mindfulness for Life*. Wollombi—Auckland 2012.

prayer. This shapes the spiritual environment.<sup>46</sup> The celebration of mystery may also take place through the liturgy, which “is a celebration of the Church’s faith, and a means of transmitting the faith. Together with Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, it is a living source of authentic and sound spirituality.”<sup>47</sup> In an age of individualism, a rediscovery of the meaning of the liturgy is crucial for spirituality not to revolve solely around the needs of man, but for man to truly listen to and receive Jesus giving glory to the Father. The Church is not merely a sociological community, but is constituted truly as the Body of Christ, and the liturgy itself is a foreshadowing of future glory.<sup>48</sup> The Eucharist must be placed at the centre as “in the most blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.”<sup>49</sup> Equally central is the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, through which believers can regain hope, the source of grace of a new beginning. In the world of progressing moral relativism and subjectivism, it is essential to properly form consciences and return to the practice of confession of sins before a priest.<sup>50</sup>

Spirituality thus understood has an impact on people’s personal lives. It also influences history and culture, and thus the social dimension. Not surprisingly, the spiritual dimension of Christianity has shaped the foundations of the European social order.<sup>51</sup> It is only through the spiritual rooting of life that Christians will be able to serve Europe and truly cooperate with all social groups. As John Paul II noted, “not only can Christians join all persons of good will in the realization of this great project, but they are also invited to be in some way its soul by showing the true meaning of the organization of the earthly city.”<sup>52</sup> A bond with Jesus is strengthened through the inner life. Without a space for spiritual development (through adoration and meditation on the word of God) all other activities of the baptised become meaningless and they become tired and weakened in their mission. At the same time, without prayer, believers fall into spiritual diseases, including various weaknesses, self-centredness, egoism, or lust.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See EE, nos. 66, 69, 78.

<sup>47</sup> EE, no. 70.

<sup>48</sup> See EE, nos. 70—71.

<sup>49</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II: *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* “*Presbyterorum ordinis*”, no. 5.

<sup>50</sup> See EE, no. 76.

<sup>51</sup> See EE, no. 19.

<sup>52</sup> JOHN PAUL II: *Message to Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, President of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences* [16.10.2000], no. 4.

<sup>53</sup> EG, nos. 262—263.

#### 4. The Church's self-understanding

The Church must regain her spiritual potential. The theological basis is the true presence of Jesus Christ in the Church, namely the real and substantial presence in the Eucharist, the real presence in other liturgical actions, as well as the presence in the lives of Christians and in their fraternal love.<sup>54</sup> The challenge remains for Catholics to strengthen their self-awareness of the identity of the Church, so that it is not reduced to only a sociological or institutional reality.

The Second Vatican Council put particular attention on the multidimensionality of the Church. The basic category describing it is the "People of God": "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. [...] The state of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in His temple."<sup>55</sup> The Church is a community of the baptised who serve the God and have the Holy Spirit. They are tightly organised, all having a share in Christ's threefold mission (as prophet, priest and king), although performing it according to their particular vocation as ordained (bishops, presbyters, deacons), consecrated or lay people. Their goal is an ultimate fulfilment and eternal glorification of God.<sup>56</sup> The Church is therefore a living and dynamic reality, with a definite character and direction.

This is the main foundation of Pope Francis' understanding of the Church. The Church is a multidimensional harmony<sup>57</sup> in which all the baptised are subjects of law and action. This marks a significant shift from the pre-conciliar division between the "teaching Church" and the "listening Church," or the "hierarchical and active Church" and the "non-ordained and passive Church." The change in the viewpoint generates a different understanding of responsibility. Not compromising the sacramental structure and the inalienable role of the ordained, especially the bishops, we must be aware of the co-responsibility of the faithful for the life and mission of the Church, carrying it out using the gifts and charisms we have and the tasks we are entrusted with. Such an ecclesiology presupposes a synodal model of functioning, an involvement of all and

<sup>54</sup> See EE, no. 22.

<sup>55</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II: *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "Lumen gentium"* [hereinafter: LG], no. 9.

<sup>56</sup> LG, nos. 10—13, 18—38, 43—47, 51.

<sup>57</sup> See EG, nos. 17, 22.

a real cooperation between clergy, the consecrated and laity.<sup>58</sup> It is baptismal theology put into practice. “The Lord calls everyone, distributing different gifts for different tasks in the Church. He calls people to the priesthood and to the consecrated life and he calls them to marriage and to commitment as lay people, both in the Church herself and in society. It is important that the wealth of gifts be fully accepted, especially on the part of the young.”<sup>59</sup> Benedict XVI recalled that the proclamation of the Word of God is the task assigned to all the baptised in the sacrament received and in their being members of the Church.<sup>60</sup> The laity are called to bear witness then and to take responsibility for building societies based on the Gospel.<sup>61</sup> It seems, however, that one cannot just stop there.

Indeed, a deeper understanding of vocation remains a challenge for the Church. Obviously, ordained ministry, which cannot be reduced to merely celebrating the sacraments and liturgy or presiding over the community, is crucial. As John Paul II noted, “in a special way priests are called by virtue of their ministry to celebrate, teach and serve the Gospel of hope.”<sup>62</sup> They are an extension of Christ’s presence as Shepherd. However, presbyters cannot carry out their mission alone. They need to work with other ordained persons, including deacons, with consecrated persons and with the laity. The role of consecrated persons cannot, however, be reduced to service only. Fundamental is their testimony of the primacy of God, the capacity for sacrifice, brotherhood and openness to those in need.<sup>63</sup> A real empowerment of the laity is also essential for a normal functioning of the Church. On the one hand, invaluable is their testimony of hope and the power of faith lived out in their daily lives and showing how values of the Gospel permeate the world. On the other hand, lay faithful need to be involved in the Church’s evangelising mission,<sup>64</sup> in the formation of others, in the responsibility for the works carried out, as well as in the co-management of various areas of the Church’s life.

The Church needs to ensure that the clergy and laity assume a synodal mentality to rearrange their daily functioning according to the synodal model. It is precisely that structure that best manifests the idea of the Church as the People of God. While various expressions of synodality are already

<sup>58</sup> See FRANCIS: *Address. Meeting with the Clergy, Consecrated People and Members of Diocesan Pastoral Councils* [4.10.2013].

<sup>59</sup> BENEDICT XVI: *Homily. Pastoral Visit to Frascati* [15.07.2012].

<sup>60</sup> VD, no. 94.

<sup>61</sup> BENEDICT XVI: *Address. The Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean* [13.05.2007], no. 3.

<sup>62</sup> EE, no. 34.

<sup>63</sup> See EE, nos. 37—38.

<sup>64</sup> EE, no. 41. Through lay faithful “the Church of Christ is made present in the various sectors of the world, as a sign and source of hope and of love.” ChL, no. 7.

in place in the Church, for instance, the Council, the Synod of Bishops, Episcopal Conferences, priests' councils, diocesan and parish pastoral councils, there still is insufficient co-responsibility of the lay and consecrated faithful in discernment and governance in the Church, without, of course, compromising the hierarchical and sacramental basis. Pope Francis gives particularly valuable hints and encouragements in this regard in his teaching and actions. Above all, he emphasises that the faithful truly follow the common way (*synodos*) and listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church. Synodality is not an ecclesiastical parliamentarism or a forum for expressing one's opinions or impose one's ideas, but a space for listening to God and other people. That is why communal and personal prayer and the genuine Christian life of the synod participants are key. They enable proper discernment, relying on the spiritual sense of faith (*sensus fidei*). Francis points out that "if we want to speak of a synodal Church, we cannot remain satisfied with appearances alone; we need content, means and structures that can facilitate dialogue and interaction within the People of God, especially between priests and laity."<sup>65</sup> All Catholics need to undertake a multidimensional responsibility, keeping in mind the communion (unity), participation and mission (evangelisation perspective) and following the encounter — listen — discern model.<sup>66</sup> In this context, it is difficult to ignore the voice of the German Synodal Way, even despite the controversies that have arisen and the risk of schism highlighted by the Holy See — for it is not about the German solution as such, but about the universal Church reconsidering the issue of co-responsibility of the laity also in the area of governance.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> FRANCIS: Address. The opening of the synod [9.10.2021].

<sup>66</sup> FRANCIS: *Homily. Holy Mass of opening of the Synodal Path* [10.10.2021]. For an analysis of Francis' teaching on synodality; see P. SAWA: "Synodalność Kościoła w ujęciu papieża Franciszka." *Teologia w Polsce* 17/2 (2023), pp. 191—217.

<sup>67</sup> "The sense of faith of all who are baptised calls for greater shared responsibility, cooperative action and enforceable participation rights." DER SYNODALE WEG: *Power and separation of powers in the Church — Joint participation and involvement in the mission*, no. 4. "A theology of the Church has developed, a spirituality of obedience and a practice of the office which unilaterally bind this power to ordination and declares it to be sacrosanct. The Church is thus shielded from criticism, disconnected from supervision, and cut off from division. Conversely, vocation and charisms, dignity and rights, competences and responsibility of the faithful in the Catholic Church are not taken into account according to the significance that they have to the people of God. [...] The respective ministries, offices, roles and responsibilities too are not sufficiently closely linked to the charisms, competences and qualifications of the faithful. This is not only about a wrong understanding of power, but above all about the lost opportunities for the development of our Church. [...] Not only access to power, but also the selection and guidance of those to whom this power is entrusted, require an honest examination and reform." Ibidem, no. 7.

A search for a deeper understanding of the Church cannot omit the parish structure. In spite of its limitations, the parish is still significant to ecclesial life. It cannot be reduced to an administrative function though. Its multifaceted mission needs to be rediscovered. John Paul II spoke of the pastoral and ecclesial tasks, but also the humanising and socialising tasks of a parish. Following this line of thinking, Francis sees the parish as the missionary centre in a given area. It cannot perform administrative functions only, but it should be a centre pulsating with life and Gospel. This can be achieved if parishioners are involved in what is happening in their parish and if the parish is seen as a community of communities.<sup>68</sup> Such a model of parish is a challenge to the Church in Europe seeking to gain a decisively evangelising direction.

At the same time, various ecclesial associations, communities and movements are gaining more and more importance now. As mentioned above, they help the faithful to live the Gospel more radically and foster development of their lay vocation and commitment to evangelisation.<sup>69</sup> It is also worth noting that for many Church members the communities that are a real space for spiritual growth and participation in the Church's life. Therefore, it might be worthy of consideration to grant some communities a status equal to personal parishes, including the right to incardinate clergy. A concern about a duality of the ecclesial structure, sometimes raised in this context, is ungrounded, because similar structures already exist, for example, military or national dioceses or parishes. Ireland's experience from the Middle Ages, when pastoral monastic and episcopal structures co-existed, may also be cited here.

Also, the role of women must be emphasised. John Paul II articulated their ability to open up selflessly to others, to share, to give birth in love, to accentuate affectivity, to take on the tasks of wife and mother. At the same time, women can perform various ecclesiastical functions in accordance with the canon law.<sup>70</sup> Following this path, Pope Francis appoints women to various management functions in the Roman Curia and by it continues to call for appreciating women's involvement in various areas of ecclesial life.

Finally, given all the diversity in the Church, it is necessary to care for unity, which takes the form of unity with the Pope, growth of love and respect among people, evangelical radicalism, understanding, co-responsibility, co-participation, missionality, service, and appreciation of the diversity of charisms and vocations.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>68</sup> EE, no. 15; EG, no. 28.

<sup>69</sup> See EE, no. 16.

<sup>70</sup> See EE, nos. 42—43.

<sup>71</sup> See EE, nos. 28—29.

The Church's self-awareness also leads to ongoing efforts towards Christian unity. Given the challenges of today, ecumenism is a necessity for the Church. For it is only in cooperation with other Christians that the mission to be a legible sign of Christ can be fulfilled — “the future of evangelization is closely linked to the witness of unity given by all Christ's followers.”<sup>72</sup>

Ecumenism is therefore a major challenge for Europe. John Paul II said that “the progress in ecumenical dialogue, which has its deepest source in the same Word of God, represents a sign of great hope for the Church of today: the growth of unity among Christians is, in fact mutually enriching for all.”<sup>73</sup> These words express the reality of the exchange of spiritual gifts, which is essential for proper understanding of ecumenism. Each ecclesial community, despite its distinctiveness and without disturbing any doctrinal issues, can help other people experience their relationship with God. They also create a space for encountering other Christians. The spiritual and evangelising dimensions are crucial here. That is why Francis asked Catholic charismatic communities to engage in the service of unity, especially with evangelical and Pentecostal communities.<sup>74</sup> In addition to the spiritual aspect, true ecumenism promotes social European unity.<sup>75</sup> For all these reasons, the work for unity should be continued, regardless of any difficulties and tensions that may arise. Pope Francis' commitment in promoting ecumenism and the inspirations he gives open the Church to new forms of coexistence and cooperation between Churches and Christian communities. They also bear fruit in the form of studies published by the Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity on the Catholic commitment to ecumenism: building unity at the local level and understanding papal primacy.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> EE, no. 54.

<sup>73</sup> EE, no. 17.

<sup>74</sup> CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEVAL INTERNATIONAL SERVICE (CHARIS): *Statutes*, Art. 3 a.c.f.g.l.

<sup>75</sup> EE, no. 30.

<sup>76</sup> The key documents include: PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY: *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Those Engaged in Pastoral Work*. Città del Vaticano 1998; PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY: *The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum*. Città del Vaticano 2020; DICASTERY PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY: *The Bishop of Rome. Primacy and synodality in ecumenical dialogues and responses to the encyclical “Ut unum sint”*. Città del Vaticano 2024.

## 5. Serving the world

Another challenge for the Church is also her being a part of the affairs of the world, for only in this way will the Church be able to bring the Gospel of love and hope to people. That is why at the very beginning of his pontificate, John Paul II wrote: “man cannot live without hope. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, [...] if he does not experience it.”<sup>77</sup> Proclamation of the Gospel and universal values serves this purpose. Therefore, the Church participates in the life of societies not only to participate in solving people’s problems, but to bear witness to lasting values and to freedom from the illusions of a life without God.<sup>78</sup> Active charity is necessary then. This is a motivation for Christians to engage with the world, including the institutional Church. A life of love shows the love of God the Father and bears witness to contemporaries. This translates into the promotion of Christian voluntary work, service towards the poor, assistance in solving the problems of unemployment, dialogue with representatives of politics and economy, care for the proper use of earthly goods, support and pastoral care of the sick. John Paul II highlighted also other social challenges that the Church cannot distance herself from. Undoubtedly, a proper approach to social and economic issues is crucial. The Catholic social teaching, with its emphasis on the value of real freedom, truth, justice and liberty, plays an important role in shaping the reality. This cannot be done merely by making demands, but calls for involvement of lay Catholics in the social life, politics, economy, culture, healthcare and education.<sup>79</sup>

Another major area of the Church’s service to societies is its teaching the truth about marriage and the family. This is particularly important in the crisis of these realities, namely, the redefinition of marriage and the questioning of its indissolubility. Therefore, a clear voice is needed with the teaching of the Gospel, education for marriage, the formation of fiancées, and support for marriages and families experiencing difficulty. Simultaneously, a commitment to the Gospel of life, with recognition of the dignity of every human being and opposition to abortion, the eugenic mentality and euthanasia is necessary.<sup>80</sup> However, its goal is not the teaching alone, but a multidimensional concern for moral

---

<sup>77</sup> JOHN PAUL II: *Encyclical Letter “Redemptor hominis”*, no. 10.

<sup>78</sup> BENEDICT XVI: *Homily. Final Mass of the 26th World Youth Day* [1.08.2011].

<sup>79</sup> See EE, nos. 84—89, 98—100.

<sup>80</sup> See EE, nos. 90—97.

renewal. The example of families and steady ethical formation can be helpful here.

Another demanding issue for the world, and thus for the Church, is migration. John Paul II advocates prudent reception of and hospitality towards migrants. This grows out of the idea of the common good (so evident in the process of globalisation), a culture of openness, the recognition of the rights of every person, and the need to combat abuse. It is not enough though only to welcome migrants. There is a need for their genuine integration, which cannot ignore respect for human values and national cultural heritage. Concern for the spirituality of migrants is also important, which is why the Church must offer pastoral care to migrants, especially Catholics. It should also defend the oppressed and excluded.<sup>81</sup> Because of its history, Europe should be characterised by openness to others.<sup>82</sup> This is part of Francis' call to go out to the peripheries, that is, the poor, the suffering, and those in need of support. Such mercy leads to experiencing the anointing that God gives to the baptised.<sup>83</sup>

The growing globalisation, freedom of communication and migration and, above all, the message of the Gospel, urge the Church to care for brotherhood among people. Its theological basis is the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on religious freedom (*Dignitatis humanae*) and the Church's relations with non-Christian religions (*Nostra aetate*). A turning point in this respect was the interreligious meeting for peace in Assisi on 27 October 1986. This idea was strongly supported by Francis. In *A Document on human fraternity for world peace and living together*, signed by the Pope and Grand Imam Ahmad al-Tayyeb (on 4 February 2019), there is a declaration of the equality of rights, duties and dignity of people destined to spread goodness, love and peace. Only brotherhood and solidarity between people can counteract various injustices and harm. An in-depth reflection on brotherhood and social friendship can be found in Francis' Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*. The Church joins the efforts for unity between people, not only for social reasons. Its rationale is evangelical, because Jesus shed his blood for all people, and the model to follow is the parable of the merciful Samaritan.<sup>84</sup> By opening up to others, in a responsible way and without denying one's own identity, one can bear witness to his or her Christian faith.

<sup>81</sup> See EE, nos. 101–103.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. JOHN PAUL II: *Message to Cardinal Miloslav Vlk...*, no. 7.

<sup>83</sup> FRANCIS: *Homily. Chrism Mass* [28.03.2013].

<sup>84</sup> FRANCIS: *Encyclical Letter "Fratelli tutti"*, nos. 56–86. "Others drink from other sources. For us the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Ibidem, no. 277.

Finally, the Church cannot distance herself from environmental issues. The encyclical letter which focuses on the contemporary climate challenges is Francis' *Laudato si*. What he says there is an important input in the dispute with ideological environmentalism and in the confrontation with political use of environmental protections issues. That is why Pope suggest an integral ecology, featuring a multidimensional view of human beings. A proper ecology cannot therefore mean only the protection of nature, but must include the protection of people, especially the poor, a proper way of life, the discovery of the meaning of life, as well as the preservation of historical, artistic and cultural heritage. For there is a single social and ecological reality. Ecology is therefore the ecology of people's lives (encompassing relationships, co-responsibility, respect for the common good, justice, and political, economic, scientific, and religious culture). The Church's mission, then, is to openly proclaim an integral anthropology and social teaching. However, in the ecological and social discourse, the Church is mainly called upon to show the spiritual aspect of life (the relationships of human beings follow the pattern of relationships within the Trinity) and the moral aspect. It is understandable then that Francis advocates ecological conversion, with its personal and communal aspects. Finally, ecology should also have a contemplative and religious dimension: following Jesus, praying thanks for food, living sacramentally, a culture of rest and celebration.<sup>85</sup>

## Conclusions

Various texts by John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis offer an integral diagnosis of the present state of the matters and propose some key suggestions for a renewal of the especially European Church. The following conclusions can be drawn from the texts:

- a) The growing secularisation calls for an evangelisation using methods that best meet present needs. What is crucial is a personal spiritual experience ("I have encountered Christ") and a response with a life-shaping faith. Alongside such a proclamation of the kerygma, the Church must proceed with a multidimensional integral formation of clergy, consecrated and lay people in order to preserve the proper deposit of faith and spirituality.

---

<sup>85</sup> FRANCIS: *Encyclical Letter "Laudato si"*, nos. 139, 143, 145, 147—201, 218—240.

- b) It is still a challenge to deepen the ecclesial awareness among the faithful so that they see the Church as a vertical and horizontal, sacramental and charismatic community. It is important to form the subjectivity of all the baptised and their real participation in and co-responsibility for the community, with respect to the prerogatives of their ordination. Synodality is a particular form of this journey of faith.
- c) Formation and structural adjustments are not enough. What the Church needs the most is spiritual renewal. Only then will it be possible to evangelise powerfully and for the community to function properly.<sup>86</sup>
- d) All the baptised are called to bear witness to the faith, which is beneficial to Europe as to fully overcome the crises it is dealing with it needs to join anthropology with Christ,<sup>87</sup> unite societies, and rediscover its Christian roots.<sup>88</sup>
- e) An appropriate conclusion might be following the invocation said by John Paul II: “Church in Europe, welcome every day with renewed freshness the gift of charity which your Lord offers to you and enables you to accept. Learn from him the content and the measure of love. *Be the Church of the Beatitudes*, constantly conformed to Christ (cf. Mt 5:1—12). Free from all forms of hindrance and dependency, be poor yourself and a friend to the poor, welcoming every person and attentive to all forms of poverty, both old and new. Continuously purified by the Father’s goodness, see in the attitude of Christ, who always defended the truth yet still showed mercy towards sinners, the supreme norm of all your actions.”<sup>89</sup>

## Bibliography

BENEDICT XVI: *Address to Participants in a meeting organized by the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships* [31.10.2008], [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/october/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20081031\\_carismatici.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20081031_carismatici.html) [accessed 3.05.2024].

BENEDICT XVI: *Address. The third group of Bishops from Poland on their “Ad Limina” visit* [17.12.2005], <https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/>

<sup>86</sup> Cf. EE, nos. 11.

<sup>87</sup> EE, nos. 7—9.

<sup>88</sup> JOHN PAUL II: *Homily. The Conclusion of the Second Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops* [23.10.1999], no. 5; EE, no. 21.

<sup>89</sup> EE, no. 105.

- speeches/2005/december/documents/hf\_ben\_xvi\_spe\_20051217\_ad-limina-poland.html [accessed 3.05.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Address. The Inaugural Session of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean* [13.05.2007], [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20070513\\_conference-aparecida.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070513_conference-aparecida.html) [accessed 10.05.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Angelus* [26.12.2012], [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_ang\\_20121226\\_st-stephen.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20121226_st-stephen.html) [accessed 5.02.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Apostolic Letter “Fides per doctrinam”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_motu\\_proprio\\_20130116\\_fides-per-doctrinam.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu_proprio_20130116_fides-per-doctrinam.html) [accessed 2.02.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Apostolic Letter “Ubicumque et semper”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_letters/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_apl\\_20100921\\_ubicumque-et-semper.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20100921_ubicumque-et-semper.html) [accessed 2.02.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Encyclical Letter “Deus caritas est”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html) [accessed 5.02.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Homily. Final Mass of the 26th World Youth Day* [1.08.2011], [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2011/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20110821\\_xxvi-gmg-madrid.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20110821_xxvi-gmg-madrid.html) [accessed 1.03.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Homily. First Vespers of Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul* [28.06.2010], [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20100628\\_vespri-pietro-paolo.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100628_vespri-pietro-paolo.html) [accessed 2.02.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Homily. Holy Mass for the closing of the Synod of Bishops* [28.10.2012], [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20121028\\_conclusion-sinodo.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20121028_conclusion-sinodo.html) [accessed 2.02.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Homily. Pastoral Visit to Frascati* [15.07.2012], [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20120715\\_frascati.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20120715_frascati.html) [accessed 10.05.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Sacramentum caritatis”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20070222\\_sacramentum-caritatis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html) [accessed 3.05.2024].
- BENEDICT XVI: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Verbum Domini”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20100930\\_verbum-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html) [accessed 3.05.2024].
- Catechism of the Catholic Church*, <https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/INDEX.HTM> [accessed 4.05.2024].
- CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL INTERNATIONAL SERVICE (CHARIS): *Statutes*, <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/KtbxLxgVTGwQlvXRgPrqKbvSgcqhFCLrsB?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1> [accessed 10.05.2024].
- COMTE-SPONVILLE A.: *Duchowość ateistyczna. Wprowadzenie do duchowości bez Boga*. Trans. E. Aduszkiewicz. Warsaw 2011.

- CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY: *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium. Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community*, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccclergy\\_doc\\_19031999\\_pretres\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc_con_ccclergy_doc_19031999_pretres_en.html) [accessed 30.01.2024].
- DER SYNODALE WEG: *Power and separation of powers in the Church — Joint participation and involvement in the mission*, [https://www.synodalerweg.de/fileadmin/Synodalerweg/Dokumente/Reden\\_Beitraege/beschluesse-broschueren/Englisch/SW-3\\_Power-and-Separation-of-Powers-in-the-Church\\_Foundational-Text.pdf](https://www.synodalerweg.de/fileadmin/Synodalerweg/Dokumente/Reden_Beitraege/beschluesse-broschueren/Englisch/SW-3_Power-and-Separation-of-Powers-in-the-Church_Foundational-Text.pdf) [accessed 10.05.2024].
- DICASTERY PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY: *The Bishop of Rome. Primacy and synodality in ecumenical dialogues and responses to the encyclical “Ut unum sint”*. Città del Vaticano 2024.
- FRANCIS OF ASSISI: *Letter to friar Anthony*. Trans. Fr. K. ESSER, O.F.M., <https://www.liturgies.net/saints/francis/writings.htm#Antonium> [accessed 3.05.2024].
- FRANCIS: *Address. The opening of the synod* [9.10.2021], <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2021/october/documents/20211009-apertura-camminosinodale.html> [accessed 1.03.2024].
- FRANCIS: *Address. Meeting with the Clergy, Consecrated People and Members of Diocesan Pastoral Councils* [4.10.2013], [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/october/documents/papa-francesco\\_20131004-clero-assisi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/october/documents/papa-francesco_20131004-clero-assisi.html) [accessed 10.05.2024].
- FRANCIS, AHMAD AL-TAYYEB: *A Document on human fraternity for world peace and living together*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190204\\_documento-fratellanza-umana.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html) [accessed 10.05.2024].
- FRANCIS: *Apostolic Constitution “Praedicate Evangelium”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/20220319-costituzione-ap-praedicate-evangelium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/20220319-costituzione-ap-praedicate-evangelium.html) [accessed 2.02.2024].
- FRANCIS: *Apostolic Constitution “Veritatis gaudium”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco\\_costituzione-ap\\_20171208\\_veritatis-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco_costituzione-ap_20171208_veritatis-gaudium.html) [accessed 1.05.2024].
- FRANCIS: *Apostolic Exhortation “Evangelii gaudium”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html) [accessed 30.01.2024].
- FRANCIS: *Apostolic Exhortation “Gaudete et exsultate”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20180319\\_gaudete-et-exsultate.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html) [accessed 1.05.2024].
- FRANCIS: *Encyclical Letter Fratelli tutti*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html) [accessed 10.05.2024].
- FRANCIS: *Encyclical Letter “Laudato si”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) [accessed 15.05.2024].
- FRANCIS: *Encyclical Letter “Lumen fidei”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130629\\_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html) [accessed 1.05.2024].

- FRANCIS: *Homily. Chrism Mass* [28.03.2013], [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130328\\_messa-crismale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html) [accessed 10.05.2024].
- FRANCIS: *Homily. Holy Mass of opening of the Synodal Path* [10.10.2021], <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2021/documents/20211010-omelia-sinodo-vescovi.html> [accessed 1.03.2024].
- FREEMAN L.: *Medytacja chrześcijańska. Twoja codzienna praktyka*. Trans. A. ZIÓŁKOWSKI. Kraków 2011.
- FREEMAN L.: *Pielgrzymka wewnętrzna. Podróż medytacyjna*. Trans. A. ZIÓŁKOWSKI. Kraków 2011.
- INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION: *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_doc\\_20111129\\_teologia-oggi\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20111129_teologia-oggi_en.html) [accessed 1.05.2024].
- JOHN PAUL II: *Apostolic Letter “Novo millennio ineunte”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/2001/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_20010106\\_novo-millennio-ineunte.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte.html) [accessed 3.05.2024].
- JOHN PAUL II: *Discorso all’Assemblea del CELAM* [9.03.1983], [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1983/march/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19830309\\_assemblea-celam.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1983/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19830309_assemblea-celam.html) [accessed 30.01.2024].
- JOHN PAUL II: *Encyclical Letter “Redemptor hominis”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_04031979\\_redemptor-hominis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html) [accessed 30.01.2024].
- JOHN PAUL II: *General audience* [25.11.1998], [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1998/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_aud\\_25111998.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_25111998.html) [accessed 3.05.2024].
- JOHN PAUL II: *Homily. The Conclusion of the Second Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops* [23.10.1999], [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1999/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_19991023\\_synod-europe.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19991023_synod-europe.html) [accessed 30.01.2024].
- JOHN PAUL II: *Message to Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, President of the Council of European Episcopal Conferences* [16.10.2000], [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2000/oct-dec/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_20001020\\_ccee.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2000/oct-dec/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20001020_ccee.html) [accessed 30.01.2024].
- JOHN PAUL II: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Christifideles laici”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html) [accessed 30.01.2024].
- JOHN PAUL II: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Ecclesia in Europa”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_20030628\\_ecclesia-in-europa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa.html) [accessed 30.01.2024].
- JOHN XXIII: *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*. In: PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO PER LA PROMOZIONE DELLA NUOVA EVANGELIZZAZIONE: *Enchiridion della Nuova Evangelizzazione. Testi del Magistero pontificio e conciliare 1939—2012*. Vaticano 2012, pp. 33—35.
- KOSTECKI R.: *Tajemnice serca*. Kraków 1982.

- KRAKOWIAK P.: „Religijność czy duchowość? Modlitwa czy medytacja?” In: *Jak żyć, panie doktorze? Psyche*. Eds. D. ŚLIŻ, A. MAMCARZ. Warszawa 2021, pp. 87–97.
- McKENZIE S., HASSED C.: *Mindfulness for Life*, Wollombi—Auckland 2012.
- McPHEETERS J. C.: *John Wesley’s Heart-Warming Religion*. Wilmore, Kentucky 2012.
- PAUL VI: *Apostolic Exhortation “Evangelii nuntiandi”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html) [accessed 2.02.2024].
- PAUL VI: *Encyclical Letter “Populorum progressio”*, [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_26031967\\_populorum.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html) [accessed 3.05.2024].
- RATZINGER J.: *Kościół. Pielgrzymująca wspólnota wiary*. Eds. S. O. HORN, V. PFNÜR. Trans. W. SZYMONA. Kraków 2005.
- RATZINGER J.: *Nowe porywy Ducha. Ruchy odnowy w Kościele*. Trans. S. CZERWIK. Kielce 2006.
- ROLHEISER R.: *W poszukiwaniu duchowości XXI wieku*. Trans. K. TYBINKA. Kraków 2006.
- SANTAGADA O. D.: *Charakterystyka oraz sytuacja sekt i niezależnych grup religijnych*. In: O. D. Santagada, E. Bravo et al.: *Wspólnoty kościelne, niezależne grupy religijne, sekty na przykładzie Ameryki Łacińskiej*. Trans. A. KAJZEREK. Warszawa 1995, pp. 13–32.
- SAWA P.: “Duchowość w prowadzonym przez wiernych dialogu z ateistami, agnostykami i obojętnymi religijnie w świetle inicjatyw ‘Dziedzińca Pogan’.” *Roczniki Teologiczne* 64/5 (2017), pp. 99–123.
- SAWA P.: “Is That a Really New Spirituality? Basics and Signs of the Spirituality of the New Evangelization — the Case of Poland.” *Ecumeny and Law* 5 (2017), pp. 95–123.
- SAWA P.: “Synodalność Kościoła w ujęciu papieża Franciszka.” *Teologia w Polsce* 17/2 (2023), pp. 191–217.
- “Sekty albo nowe ruchy religijne. Wyzwanie duszpasterskie.” *L’Osservatore Romano* (Polish edition) 79/7 (1986), pp. 3–6.
- ŠPIDLIK T.: *Duchowość chrześcijańskiego Wschodu. Przewodnik systematyczny*. Trans. L. RODZIEWICZ. Kraków 2005.
- The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal, 1901–2001*. Ed. V. SYNAN. Nashville, Tennessee 2012.
- PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY: *The Bishop and Christian Unity: An Ecumenical Vademecum*. Città del Vaticano 2020.
- PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY: *The Ecumenical Dimension in the Formation of Those Engaged in Pastoral Work*. Città del Vaticano 1998.
- VATICAN COUNCIL II: *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests “Presbyterorum ordinis”*, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_presbyterorum-ordinis\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html) [accessed 30.01.2024].
- VATICAN COUNCIL II: *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church “Lumen gentium”*, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) [accessed 1.03.2024].

PRZEMYSŁAW SAWA

## Les défis de l'Église en Europe : indications dans l'enseignement de Jean-Paul II, Benoît XVI et François

### Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de présenter les principales indications pour le renouveau de l'Église catholique en Europe face aux défis contemporains, qu'ils soient internes (par exemple : crise du fonctionnement des communautés, lacunes dans l'évangélisation, insuffisances dans la catéchèse, sécularisation, engagement insuffisant des laïcs) ou externes (par exemple : crise générale de la religiosité, individualisation de la vie). La base principale est l'enseignement de Jean-Paul II, Benoît XVI et François, que l'on peut qualifier de « papes de la nouvelle évangélisation ». L'analyse porte essentiellement sur les documents officiels des évêques de Rome, complétés par une sélection de leurs interventions officielles (homélies, discours), compte tenu de l'abondance des textes.

L'étude de ces textes permet de formuler les propositions suivantes : la nécessité d'une évangélisation conduisant à une décision personnelle de foi, d'une catéchèse et formation multidimensionnelle, du renouvellement de la spiritualité, de l'approfondissement de la conscience ecclésiale des fidèles et de l'engagement de l'Église dans les affaires du monde (l'œcuménisme, le dialogue interreligieux, la fraternité universelle, la résolution des questions sociales, l'affirmation de la vérité sur le mariage et la famille, l'aide à résoudre des problèmes liés aux migrations et la protection de l'environnement).

**Mots-clés :** Église catholique, Europe, évangélisation, catéchèse et formation, spiritualité, ecclésiologie, unité, dialogue, fraternité, écologie

PRZEMYSŁAW SAWA

## Le sfide della Chiesa in Europa: indicazioni nell'insegnamento di Giovanni Paolo II, Benedetto XVI e Francesco

### Riassunto

L'obiettivo di questo articolo è evidenziare le principali indicazioni per il rinnovamento della Chiesa cattolica in Europa nel contesto delle sfide contemporanee, sia interne (ad esempio: crisi nel funzionamento delle comunità, carenze nell'evangelizzazione, lacune nella catechesi, secolarizzazione, insufficiente coinvolgimento dei laici), sia esterne (ad esempio: crisi diffusa della religiosità, individualizzazione della vita). La base principale è costituita dall'insegnamento di Giovanni Paolo II, Benedetto XVI e Francesco, che si possono definire «papi della nuova evangelizzazione». L'analisi si concentra principalmente sui documenti ufficiali dei vescovi di Roma, integrati da una selezione dei loro interventi ufficiali (omelie, discorsi), considerata l'ampiezza dei testi disponibili.

Lo studio di questi testi porta a formulare le seguenti indicazioni: la necessità di un'evangelizzazione che conduca a una decisione personale di fede, di catechesi e formazione multidimensionale, di rinnovamento della spiritualità, di approfondimento della consapevolezza ecclesiale dei fedeli e di impegno della Chiesa nelle questioni del mondo (ecumenismo, dialogo interreligioso, fraternità universale, risoluzione dei problemi sociali, affermazione della verità sul matrimonio e sulla famiglia, aiuto nella gestione dei problemi migratori e attenzione all'ambiente).

**Parole chiave:** Chiesa cattolica, Europa, evangelizzazione, catechesi e formazione, spiritualità, ecclesiologia, unità, dialogo, fraternità, ecologia