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The Issue of Environmental Protection in the Doctrine of the Catholic Church

Problematyka ochrony środowiska naturalnego w doktrynie Kościoła katolickiego

SUMMARY

The article is an analysis of the complex position of the Catholic Church on the problem of environmental protection. The author follows the evolution of views, initially of contributory significance, as a result of the vision of man as God's creation functioning in the world also created by God. A large part of the article addresses the doctrinal revolution of Pope Francis contained in the encyclical *Laudato si'* and an attempt to answer the question: How did this happen?

Keywords: doctrine; the Catholic Church; ecology; environment protection

The issue of environmental protection is an extremely important question in the social discourse in its broad sense. It is important both theoretically and practically, it goes in line with the problems of the axiology of social life. The Catholic Church has seen the need to express also in the field of environmental protection as regards its teaching on social matters. Therefore, the issue of environmental protection has found its place within the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Until the publication of the encyclical *Laudato si'* by Pope Francis, the so-called environmental question did not take a prominent place in the statements of the Pope or hierarchs of the Church. It was discussed in the form of minor statements in documents generally addressing the complex problems of the contemporary world.

Over the recent decades, the position of the Catholic Church on environmental protection has been contained in a number of official documents, including encyc-

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licals, exhortations, messages and homilies[1]. Apart from the eschatological or the so-called ecotheology, it is worth taking a closer look at the doctrinal dimension of the social teaching of the Church, which is constantly updated.

As part of the considerations pursued herein, I focus on the doctrinal level, while omitting methodologically and objectively the complex issues of theology, including ecotheology or pastoral theology. The terms "ecology" and "environmental protection" will be used interchangeably, with the author's full awareness of the distinctions of notions in the literature on the subject[2]. The above approach is justified by the terminology adopted by the doctrine of the Church, which does not precisely delimit the content of the terms which are used interchangeably[3]. The term "doctrine" determines the time frame for the deliberations and the scope of the statements of the Magisterium of the Church under analysis[4].

From the beginning of teaching, the Catholic Church referred to man as one of the elements of God's plan for the creation of the world; an element that interacts with the surrounding environment. Many Fathers and Doctors of the Church formulated statements based on the contemplation of the relationship: God – nature – man[5]. Reflections on the relationship between man and nature can be found in the writings of St. Irenaeus of Lyons (140–202) who comprehensively treated the universe as a work of God's love, Tertullian (160–225), Clement of Alexandria (150–212) or Origen (185–254)[6]. In the writings of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (315–386), St. Ambrose of Milan (339–397), St. John Chrysostom (350–407), St. Hilary of Poiters (315–367) or Evagrius of Pontus (345–399), the attentive reader will find theological elements regarding the consideration of nature as a work of God[7].

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[1] K. Wojciechowski points to the rooting of the Catholic Church's teaching on eco-social issues in the Scriptures and the Christ's teachings. See K. Wojciechowski, *Ekologia w nauczaniu Kościoła – przyroda jako dzieło Boga*, [in:] *Ekologia a duchowość chrześcijańska*, ed. S. Niziński, Poznań 2009, p. 41.

[2] Cf. J. Jaroń, *Ekologia. Sozologia. Ekofilozofia. Ekoetyka. Ekonomia proekologiczna*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 13–22.

[3] A broad understanding of ecology, which includes pastoral activities consisting of environmental education, can be found.

[4] I define "doctrine" as "a structured set of ideas, theories and political programmes or fragments thereof, aimed at having a real impact on reality". As a rule, doctrine constitutes a "relatively structured set", "based on the methodological awareness of its author, as well as the direct intention to rationally interpret the phenomenon of the state and the law". Moreover, a doctrine should be characterised by a "real, social impact" (L. Dubel, *Historia doktryn politycznych i prawnych do końca XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2002, pp. 17–18).

[5] Cf. R. Rogowski, *Teoekologia. Mistyka wszystkich rzeczy*, Wrocław 2008.

[6] In a broader perspective: A. Williams, *Boski zmysł. Intelekt w teologii pastoralnej*, Kraków 2014, p. 42.

[7] Fragments of scriptures referring to nature contain references to plants, birds or vermin, where God's love is compared to a female defending their chicks with care and devotion. As an example, see

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It is difficult to indisputably attribute to a certain thinker of antiquity or the early Middle Ages the title of "the first Christian eco-philosopher", because many of them formulated statements expressing concern about the condition of the natural environment[8].

The beginnings of Christianity involved also ascetic tendencies among hermits, monks who lived in harsh conditions. At that time, monastic asceticism flourished, a lifestyle based on prayer, fasting and sacrifice, as well as respect for nature and its gifts. Monastic rules were often defined with reference to the asceticism of St. Anthony the Hermit, Pachomius, St. Basil in the East and St. Martin of Tours in the West[9].

It is also worth noting the scientific approach of Isidore, who, using a terminology close to the modern nomenclature, pointed to the impact of environmental conditions on the life of plants[10].

The following may also be listed as "medieval ecologists": Hugh of St. Victor (1096–1141), an Augustinian, proclaiming admiration for the world in his theological writings, Conrad of Hirschau (1070–1150), a Benedictine who personified the world of plants[11]. Undoubtedly, the "godmother of modern ecology" should be considered Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), a Benedictine, and a doctor of the Church since 2012[12]. She was fascinated by the world of flora, which she referred to medicine, pharmacology and herbalism. She pointed to the need for human solidarity with all the creation, animate nature, and to the consequences of disrespect for nature[13]. In this context, one should also keep in mind the tradition of

Klemens Aleksandryjski, *Zachęta Greków*, [in:] *Apologie*, ed. E. Stanula, Warszawa 1988; Hieronim ze Strydonu, *Listy I (1–50)*, Kraków 2010.

[8] An excellent example of early medieval ecology in the service of theology are the theological-natural writings by Basil the Great. He presented several different meanings of the term "nature", he defined nature as "a piece of art", a gift from God, the external world of man, the human environment; he also referred to the spiritual contemplation of nature. See E. Osek, *Przyroda w pismach Bazylego Wielkiego*, Lublin 2009, pp. 17–20.

[9] *Benedictus montes, Bernardinus valles amabat*. "St. Benedict's monks and St. Romuald's eremites (the Camaldolese) settled in mountains, the followers of Bernard of Clairvaux (Cistercians) in valleys – far from people and tumult" (J. Brusiło, *Teologia praktyczna i ekologia. Wprowadzenie historyczne do idei Sacrum i przyroda*, Kraków 2015, p. 45). In more detail: S. Jaromi, *Idea ogrodu św. Franciszka jako przykład chrześcijańskiej troski o bioróżnorodność*, [in:] *Ogród Pana. XVIII Seminarium Sacrum i przyroda*, ed. J. Brusiło, Kraków 2010, p. 86.

[10] More in: T. Krynicka, *Świat roślin w XVII księdze Etymologii Izydora z Sewilli*, Lublin 2007, pp. 138–171.

[11] J Brusiło, *op. cit*., p. 61.

[12] P. de Plunkett, *Ekologia – stereotypy i rzeczywistość. Od Biblii do naszych czasów*, Poznań 2008, p. 76.

[13] According to St. Hildegard, people who destroy nature will be traumatized by demons and deprived of the care of angels. Putting man on top of the creation, God made him responsible for what was at the bottom. *Ibidem*, pp. 76–77.

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ecological monastic life, to which St. Francis contributed. In many monastic rules and constitutions, we can find provisions that today can be well called ecological[14].

From the 12th century, theology's interest in nature had declined. Theologians have dealt mostly with mysticism, the rational analysis of revealed truths.

Out of the Church's teaching about man's attitude towards nature (perceived as the Creator's work), the so-called ecological issue has grown up in the doctrine of the Catholic Church. It found its place in the statements of Paul IV, documents of the Second Vatican Council, encyclicals and messages of John XXIII, John Paul II, Benedict XVI. The culmination of the statements of the Magisterium of the Church was the "green encyclical" of Pope Francis *Laudato si'*. The title *Laudato si'*, i.e. *Glory to Thee* or *Be Praised*, comes from *The Canticle of the Sun* by St. Francis of Assisi.

St. Francis of Assisi had a peculiar approach to the natural environment. His contemplation of nature turned into mysticism. *The Canticle of the Sun* points to treating man as one with nature. The common origin of people, animals and heavenly bodies – from one God the Father – makes the whole animate nature one family[15]. Francis' mysticism was the soil in which the concern for nature and the awareness of the need to care for it has grown. "The Poor Man of Assisi" took actions that today can be well described as pro-environmental.

> He walked on rocks with respect, because of what is called the Rock. […] He forbade his brothers to cut down whole trees in order to give them the chance to grow again. He told the gardener to leave a fallow land around the garden, so that the greenery of herbs and the beauty of flowers praise the Father of all beautiful things. In the garden, he ordered to delimit a parcel of land for fragrant herbs and flowers so as to bring to mind the eternal bliss. He used to remove worms from the path so that they would not be trampled on, and he ordered that the bees be provided honey and the best wine, so that they would not starve to death in times of frost[16].

The words and deeds of St. Francis of Assisi resulted in granting him the title of the "first ecologist"[17]. Thus, the figure of St. Francis is presented as a model for the contemporary man. John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter *Inter santos*, declared St. Francis of Assisi the patron of ecologists. The Pope made such a decision as a result of the request of the International Association called Planning Environ-

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[14] More in: K. Michalski, *Ochrona przyrody w regułach i konstytucjach zakonnych*, [in:] idem, *Filozofia wieków średnich*, Kraków 1987, pp. 306–321.

[15] "It turns out today that the *The Canticle of the Sun* (or *Canticle of the Creatures*) created 800 years ago is an eco-theological treatise and an appeal for at least the protection, care and respect for the biosphere" (J. Brusiło, *op. cit*., p. 66).

[16] Tomasz z Celano, *Życiorys drugi Franciszka z Asyżu*, [in:] *Źródła franciszkańskie. Pisma św. Franciszka, źródła biograficzne świętego Franciszka, pisma św. Klary i źródła biograficzne, teksty ustalające normy dla braci i sióstr od pokuty*, eds. R. Prejs, Z. Kijas, Kraków 2005, pp. 686–687.

[17] A. Derdziuk, *Św. Franciszek z Asyżu – patron ekologów*, [in:] *Ekologia. Przesłanie moralne Kościoła*, eds. J. Nagórny, J. Gocko, Lublin 2002, p. 206.

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mental and Ecological Institute for Quality of Life addressed to Cardinal Silvio Oddi, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Clerics. John Paul II considered the example given by Francis as the "most beautiful proof" to support the thesis about the need to protect God's creatures from thoughtless destruction[18].

The doctrine of the Catholic Church on ecology refers primarily to the principles of common good and solidarity. It is the common good that requires each individual and social groups and institutions to commit themselves to nature conservation, becoming a condition for sustainable development. The doctrine of the Catholic Church is directed towards integral development, referring not only to the ethical sphere but also to scientific and technical progress and economic development. It points to the necessity of legal regulations in this area.

In view of the worrying ecological situation, globalization of the modern world, the Church takes a clearly defined position. It revises the model of life of contemporary inhabitants of developed countries in order to combat injustice and poverty in developing countries. Thus, it formulates a call for a "new solidarity" with global dimensions for the protection of the environment and society. Solving the ecological crisis crossing the borders of countries and continents requires political decisions of those responsible for the health of present and future generations. Hence, the voice of the Catholic Church concerned about the future of the "blue planet". The solidarity of actions relating to the common origin and destination of goods is justified by the Scriptures. All creatures have the same Creator, and therefore the Earth is their common heritage. All have the right to have access to its fruits and resources: "God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner" (*Gaudium et spes*, 69)[19].

The doctrine of the Catholic Church calls for a "new ecological solidarity" in the name of respect for the life and dignity of the human person. Thus, the Church recognizes the environment as a common good of all humanity. The Church strives to implement this ecological message by promoting a proper model of life, among other things, by taking part in conferences of global organizations dealing with ecological issues, e.g. at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the FAO Conference in Rome in 1997 or in Johannesburg in 2002. The Magisterium of the Church is aware that legitimate environmental demands very often encounter

[18] Cf. Jan Paweł II, *List na zakończenie jubileuszu osiemdziesięciolecia urodzin św. Franciszka*, „Studia Franciszkańskie" 1984, vol. 1, p. 36.

[19] *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes* promulgated by his Holiness, Pope Paul VI on 7 December 1965, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html [access: 10.09.2020]. In the text hereof, I will refer to this document using its Latin title *Gaudium et spes* with the paragraph number, like in the case of quoting Papal encyclicals and Apostolic letters.

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difficulties in their implementation for mainly political, economic or divergent economic reasons. Hence, the Catholic Church's actions aimed at forming the attitude of ecological responsibility. Therefore, moderation in the use of natural resources, restraint in consumption, internal discipline and a kind of asceticism, called "ecological asceticism", are preferred.

The position of the Catholic Church in the field of environmental protection issues has evolved. In the conciliar documents, the doctrine of the Church did not address environmental issues directly[20]. Paul VI referred to the matter in the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and in the Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*. In the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* he touched upon ecological issues, and in the Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* he mentioned the natural environment as one of the so-called "new problems": "Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation" (*Octogesima Adveniens*, 21)[21]. Paul VI wrote in his *Message to Mr. Maurice F. Strong, Secretary-General of the Conference on the Environment (Stockholm, June 5–17, 1972)* about the change of mentality that would enable the reduction of the materialistic attitude, conducive to moderation in the use and consumption of temporal goods[22].

> The development we speak of here cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man (*Populorum Progressio*, 14).

> Neither individuals nor nations should regard the possession of more and more goods as the ultimate objective. Every kind of progress is a two-edged sword. It is necessary if man is to grow as a human being; yet it can also enslave him, if he comes to regard it as the supreme good and cannot look beyond it (*Populorum Progressio*, 19).

The position of the Holy See was emphasized with regard to the need to combine pro-environmental activities with changes in the morality of members of human society. Natural resources, as the common property of mankind, including future generations, cannot be appropriated by any nation, community or individual. With time, the slogan of ecological conversion is formulated, directly linked with moral conversion.

The Second Vatican Council did not directly address the issue of environmental protection. We will not find the terms "ecology" or "environmental protection" in the Council documents, or even verbal references to the natural environment.

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[20] B. Jurczyk, *Ekologia – człowiek – Kościół. Antropologiczny wymiar kryzysu ekologicznego w ocenie Kościoła*, Opole 2002, p. 7.

[21] *Octogesima adveniens*, Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI, www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html [access: 13.08.2020].

[22] S. Nowosad, *Antropologiczno-etyczny wymiar ekologii*, [in:] *Ekologia. Przesłanie moralne…*, p. 80.

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Nevertheless, we can read from the documents a message about the natural environment: its destruction, protection, modification. Indirectly, the Second Vatican Council drew attention to the discussed issues in Chapter III of *Gaudium et spes*, addressing the moral order in relation to human activity (33–39), the necessity to change attitudes and mentality of modern man. In this aspect, attention should be paid to the temporal coincidence between the preparation of the document *Gaudium et spes* and the speeches of Paul VI containing ecological matters.

"The imbalances under which the modern world labors are linked with that more basic imbalance which is rooted in the heart of man" (*Gaudium et spes*, 10). *Gaudium et spes* points out that technical progress itself is not wrong (64–66). Evil lies in the excessive activity of man in transforming the natural environment, resulting in the degradation of the Earth[23].

In the 1980s, environmental issues were addressed in almost all documents of the Church's social teaching. John Paul II wrote about "ecological concern" (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 26) and about the "ecological question" (*Centesimus annus*, 37), thus drawing attention to the threat to the natural environment, human pride and the so-called anthropological error, as well as about the so-called "human ecology" closely correlated with "ecological asceticism" (*Evengelium vitae* of 1995)[24].

In the encyclical *Redemptor hominis* of 1979, John Paul II, noticing the need to change man's approach to the natural and social environment, wrote:

> This state of menace for man from what he produces shows itself in various directions and various degrees of intensity. We seem to be increasingly aware of the fact that the exploitation of the earth, the planet on which we are living, demands rational and honest planning. At the same time, exploitation of the earth not only for industrial but also for military purposes and the uncontrolled development of technology outside the framework of a long-range authentically humanistic plan often bring with them a threat to man's natural environment, alienate him in his relations with nature and remove him from nature. […] The development of technology and the development of contemporary civilization, which is marked by the ascendancy of technology, demand a proportional development of morals and ethics (*Redemptor hominis*, 15).

However, in the Message for the World Day of Peace of 1 January 1990, Peace with God the Creator, peace with all of creation, John Paul II stated:

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[23] J. Brusiło (*op. cit.*, p. 207) points to the question of Polish terminology: "In the first translation of the Council documents into Polish, the Latin word *natura*, *-ae* was expressed as *przyroda* [nature] (*cząstka przyrody* [part of the nature] KDK 14, *składniki przyrody* [nature elements] KDK 38, *piętno na przyrodzie* [impact on the nature] KDK 67), while in the current translation the original word is ambiguously translated, respectively: *cząstka natury* [part of the nature] KDK 14, *owoce natury* [fruits of the nature] KDK 38, *piętno na tworzonych przedmiotach materialnych* [impact on material objects created] (*res naturae*, KDK 67)".

[24] All the quotes from John Paul's encyclicals in English come from www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals.index.html [access: 10.09.2020].

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The gradual depletion of the ozone layer and the related "greenhouse effect" has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs. Industrial waste, the burning of fossil fuels, unrestricted deforestation, the use of certain types of herbicides, coolants and propellants: all of these are known to harm the atmosphere and environment. […] It is necessary, however, that the entire human community – individuals, States and international bodies – take seriously the responsibility that is theirs[25].

According to John Paul II, Christians have a special duty to care for nature. In the homily delivered in Zamosc on 12 June 1999, the Pope expressed his concern about the future of the natural environment of man, and about the constantly deteriorating condition of the air, sea and inland waters:

The beauty of this land leads me to appeal its preservation for future generations. If you love our native land, do not let this appeal go unanswered! In a special way I call upon those who have been entrusted with responsibility for this country and its development, and I urge them not to neglect their duty of protecting it against environmental destruction. Let them devise programmes for the protection of the environment and ensure that they are properly put into effect! Above all, let them train people to show respect for the common good, for the laws of nature and of life! May the be supported by organizations which work for the protection of natural resources! In the family and in the schools there must be training in respect for life, goodness and beauty. All people of good will should cooperate in this great task[26].

In many documents, the Pope stressed the ambivalence of progress and scientific achievements that bring benefits for man and, at the same time, negative effects for humanity. He gave examples of industry and agriculture. He drew attention to the growing "greenhouse effect" and the mixing of the ozone layer and emphasized that when using technological achievements, one must take into account the multifaceted nature of the ecosystem. For the Catholic Church, the ecological crisis has become tantamount to the moral crisis that manifests itself at the anthropological level.

At the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day. […] Man, who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him (*Centesimus annus*, 37).

[25] *Message of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, for the celebration of the World Day of Peace*, 1 January 1990, www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html [access: 17.08.2020].

[26] *Apostolic journey to Poland. Liturgy of the Word. Homily of His Holiness John Paul II*, Zamosc, 12 June 1999, www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1999/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19990612_zamosc.html [access: 17.08.2020].

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> The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to "use and misuse", or to dispose of things as one pleases. […] when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 34).

The ecological crisis therefore has a moral dimension conditioned by human greed, ever growing consumerism, bad nutritional habits, and a lifestyle that is objectively harmful to the environment: man "a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards having rather than being, and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself" (*Centesimus annus*, 36)[27].

Rich societies tend to consume too much and be transformed into a "civilization of waste and rubbish"[28]. This phenomenon is accompanied by the global injustice related to the accumulation of goods by a small part of the human community and the lack of access to basic goods such as water, food, medicines for the large part of the population living in undeveloped countries[29].

The pro-ecological message of John Paul II was continued by Benedict XVI, who in his *Message for the World Day of Peace on 1 January 2007* said:

> The destruction of the environment, its improper or selfish use, and the violent hoarding of the earth's resources cause grievances, conflicts and wars, precisely because they are the consequences of an inhumane concept of development. Indeed, if development were limited to the technical-economic aspect, obscuring the moral-religious dimension, it would not be an integral human development, but a one-sided distortion which would end up by unleashing man's destructive capacities[30].

On 17 July 2008, during the meeting with young people in Sydney, Benedict XVI said:

> Yet the views afforded of our planet from the air were truly wondrous. The sparkle of the Mediterranean, the grandeur of the north African desert, the lushness of Asia's forestation, the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, the horizon upon which the sun rose and set, and the majestic splendour of

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[27] Similarly, John Paul II spoke at the catechesis on 2 April 1986: "The source of the ecological crisis, which is always associated with a certain anti-community egoism, is the arbitrary – and consequently harmful – use of creatures, in violation of their laws and natural order, without respecting the inherent purpose of the work of creation. This behaviour is also the result of the falsely conceived autonomy of temporal things, when man uses these things without reference to God […] then he does immensurable damage to himself" (Jan Paweł II, *Stworzenie a słuszna autonomia rzeczy stworzonych*, [in:] idem, *Wierzę w Boga Ojca Stworzyciela*, Watykan 1997, p. 255).

[28] Cf. S. Nowosad, *Antropologiczno-etyczny wymiar...*, p. 74.

[29] Cf. idem, *Współczesne zagadnienia demograficzne i moralna ocena proponowanych rozwiązań*, „Roczniki Teologiczne" 1995, R. 3, pp. 88–91.

[30] Cf. *Message of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, for the celebration of the World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2007, https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20061208_xl-world-day-peace.html [access: 17.08.2020].

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Australia's natural beauty which I have been able to enjoy these last couple of days; these all evoke a profound sense of awe. It is as though one catches glimpses of the Genesis creation story – light and darkness, the sun and the moon, the waters, the earth, and living creatures; all of which are "good" in God's eyes (Gen 1, 1–24). […] What do we discover? Perhaps reluctantly we come to acknowledge that there are also scars which mark the surface of our earth: erosion, deforestation, the squandering of the world's mineral and ocean resources in order to fuel an insatiable consumption.

The question of ecology has been close to Pope Francis from the beginning of his pontificate, from the moment he took the name of Francis. After many years, there was a return to the philosophy of Francis of Assisi, and his pro-ecological message wins more and more followers (regardless of worldview orientation)[31].

Reading the texts of St. Francis, it should be kept in mind that they were written not by a philosopher, but by a mystic. The way of experiencing God and faith is the key to understanding Francis' love for creatures, a non-utilitarian perspective on nature, brotherhood with man and every creature, and humility so underestimated today and at the same time so necessary[32].

In the *Catechesis for the 2013 World Environment Day*, the Pope said: "I would therefore like us all to make the serious commitment to respect and care for creation, to pay attention to every person, to combat the culture of waste and of throwing out so as to foster a culture of solidarity and encounter"[33].

Currently, the Pope points out that ecology corresponds to the mission of the Church in the modern world[34]. At the same time, he stresses that the current "ecological crisis" results from many years of indifference and neglect of the "common home". He presents his observations on the basis of an analysis of human activity in the field of transforming the natural environment.

The Magisterium of the Catholic Church has constantly emphasized that technological progress is not bad in itself. On the one hand, it leads to an improvement in the quality of human life, and on the other hand, to the deterioration of the quality of natural environment elements (water, air, polluted soil). The question arises how a person will use one's knowledge and skills. According to the Church, the final solutions should be sought in the transformation of consciousness, in the education of man "towards a new lifestyle". Then the technological progress will lead to the development of technology limiting the emission of harmful substances, to the

[31] J. Dębowski, *Ekologia osoby ludzkiej w chrześcijańskim nauczaniu społecznym*, Olsztyn 2001, p. 63.

[32] Z. Świerczek, *Ekologia – Kościół i św. Franciszek*, Kraków 1990, p. 114.

[33] Pope Francis, *General Audience*, Saint Peter's Square, Wednesday, 5 June 2013, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130605_udienza-generale.html [access: 10.08.2020].

[34] As early as in *Redemptor hominis* one may read that the Church "cannot remain insensible to whatever serves man's true welfare, any more than she can remain indifferent to what threatens it" (*Redemptor hominis*, 13).

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production of renewable energy, and to the change in energy consumption in the manufacturing industry and households. Man must limit his activity and abandon the role of only a consumer, using the resources of the Earth like a plunderer. If he fails to do this and continues to strive only for the selfish satisfaction of one's own needs and desires, he will "sin ecologically". "Since Christian theology considers the world an epiphany of God, this is the source of the Christian's duty to protect the God-established order and stable harmony in the existing world"[35].

Modern technique and technology offer great opportunities, the use of which can either be a blessing or a curse. The final decision depends on what the doctrine of the Church calls "moral condition". Strong competition, emphasis on maintaining a high level of consumption, struggle for market dominance and economic efficiency should not be higher in the Christian hierarchy of values than ethical matters.

> The principle of the maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy. As long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment (*Laudato si'*, 195)[36].

Perceiving progress in moral terms, as proposed by Francis, seems to be restrictive, too costly and out of step with the times. "The alliance between the economy and technology ends up sidelining anything unrelated to its immediate interests" (*Laudato si'*, 54) The Pope is aware of this when he writes: "For new models of progress to arise, there is a need to change models of global development; this will entail a responsible reflection on the meaning of the economy and its goals with an eye to correcting its malfunctions and misapplications" (*Laudato si'*, 194)

Francis' ecology follows the path of peace, love and reconciliation with every living organism. It points to the path of universal brotherhood to be followed by man. The Pope, like the Saint Francis of Assisi, emphasizes that the good of nature must take precedence over economic and social goods. On the one hand, Franciscan spirituality influences the perception of environmental problems, and on the other, it implies the recommendations of pro-ecological life: respect for nature and the awareness that one is only a guest on Earth; the use of resources of the natural environment without using them up and passing the gift of God in good condition to the next generations; searching for substitute raw materials. This is how the path to counteracting the so-called ecological crisis is set by Pope Francis. It entails the need to reassess economic goals, the role of economy and its tools, and a change in the attitude of politics and economy towards serving a particular community.

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[35] J. Dębowski, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[36] *Encyclical Letter Laudato si' of the Holy Father Francis on care for our common home*, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html [access: 17.08.2020].

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The Pope points to the need for peaceful international cooperation in the name of solidarity, the common good, the maintenance of peace and a fair distribution of natural and material goods.

The ecological crisis, which we read about in the encyclical *Laudato si'*, is therefore a multifaceted problem: social, ethical, economic and anthropological. It reaches "the very foundations of culture and spirituality"[37]. Francis carries out a detailed analysis of the consequences of the ecological crisis, to which he refers to as the crisis in our home.

Man's existence is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with other people and with nature in its broad sense (*Laudato si'*, 66). He must, again and again, keep in mind that he is not the creator of the world, but only an inhabitant of the Earth. He comes across a reality, the world of nature, which is not a shapeless mass completely manipulated by him. Hence, the call of Pope Francis to feel responsible for the natural environment, to take action in order to protect it. The Pope is of the opinion that the consumerist lifestyle, the technocratic paradigm, and cultural globalization cannot be defended. He writes: "There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology" (*Laudato si'*, 118). A proper ecological attitude requires a theological foundation which is best served by pastorally make the people aware of the responsibility for the natural environment. Thus, the Pope sensitized the readers of the encyclical *Laudato si'* on "media manipulation" and points to the lack of knowledge about the environment resulting from incomplete education. He indicates that actions aimed at nature protection should begin with activities on a microscale (households, regions) and slowly spread to wider and wider circles: states, international communities. The Pope points to the necessity of international cooperation in order to seek solutions and implement them. At the same time, he is aware that the interests of the world's leaders are too often opposed to the preservation of the harmony and balance of the natural environment. He is aware of the dichotomy of the modern world: on the one hand, rapid technical progress, and, on the other hand, a slow but inevitable process leading to an ecological disaster. The remedy for this situation is the proposal of "ecological conversion" formulated by Pope Francis.

> Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. This implies avoiding the dynamic of dominion and the mere accumulation of pleasures (*Laudato si'*, 222).

[37] J. Poznański, S. Jaromi, *Wprowadzenie*, [in:] *Kościół i nauka w obliczu ekologicznych wyzwań. Źródła, inspiracje i konteksty encykliki Laudate si*, eds. J. Poznański, S. Jaromi, Kraków 2016, p. 8.

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STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł jest analizą złożonego stanowiska Kościoła katolickiego odnośnie do problemu ochrony środowiska naturalnego. Autorka śledzi ewolucję poglądów mających początkowo znaczenie przyczynkarskie, będące wynikiem wizji człowieka jako dzieła Bożego funkcjonującego w świecie również stworzonym przez Boga. Duża część opracowania została poświęcona doktrynalnej rewolucji papieża Franciszka zawartej w encyklice *Laudato si* oraz próbie odpowiedzi na pytanie, jak do tego doszło.

Słowa kluczowe: doktryna; Kościół katolicki; ekologia; ochrona środowiska