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## A THEOLOGIAN TODAY. IDENTITY AND SPIRITUALITY OF A THEOLOGIAN IN POPE FRANCIS' STATEMENTS

The author arranged Pope Francis' statements drawing a portrait of a theologian, and then on their basis characterized the spirituality of the person involved in *scientia fidei*. The theologian, according to the Holy Father, encountered Christ personally and cannot live without Him. United with the Son, he participates in His knowledge of the Father. The successor of St. Peter demands from the Catholic theologian existential orthodoxy, which is the *sine qua non* condition of practising orthodox theology. The spirituality of the theologian is inscribed in the "missionary spirituality" proposed to the whole Church; the theologian should be personally involved in the work of evangelization. The Pope also emphasizes the connection between the doctrine of faith and the spiritual life or even with holiness. The theologian, open to *Deus semper maior*, prays on his knees, but includes in his or her prayer the affairs of the people; his or her reflection is on the border between the Revelation and reality. The soul of theology is not only to listen to the Word of God, but also to take into account the "hermeneutical value" of the People of God. Francis urges us to abandon the theology done only "from behind the desk." The theologian's spirituality must include the willingness to be permeated with the smell of the people and the street.

Two years before the election of Jorge Mario Bergoglio to the Holy See, a study by the International Theological Commission, entitled *Theology Today, Perspectives, principles and criteria*, was published. In this document, apart from the determinants of Catholic theology, there are also passages in which one can

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read about characteristic traits of the spirituality of the theologian. In this text I intend to first arrange the statements of Pope Francis in order to draw a portrait of the theologian expected by him, and then to characterize the spirituality of the theologian which emerges on this basis.<sup>1</sup> I will do so against the background of the Commission's reflections, in order to show more clearly the specificity of the challenges that the Holy Father poses to those who practise the doctrine of faith. The whole will be crowned with an *adhortatio* (exhortation) which I address to Polish theologians.

## CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT CHRIST

One of the three features of the identity of a theologian directly articulated by the Holy Father is the experience of the encounter of the Son of God. He cannot be a theologian who cannot say "I cannot live without Christ." This was pointed out by the Pope in his video message to the participants of the International Theological Congress held in 2015 at the Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina. He stressed there that the theologian cannot exist without the object of his love and without sharing the discovery of the Son of God with others.<sup>2</sup> These words should be placed in the context of the pontificate's manifesto, Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, in which Francis repeats after his predecessor that at the beginning of being a Christian there is an encounter with the event, with the Person of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Characterized by George Weigel as a "radically converted Christian disciple"<sup>4</sup> Francis invites every Christian to renew his personal encounter with Jesus Christ (EG 3). The encounter with God's love leads to a liberation from self-absorption

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<sup>1</sup> The question I have raised is, of course, connected with the question of the Holy Father's perception of the role of "teaching the faith" in the life of the Church. I have taken up this subject in the following text: *Wizja teologii w wypowiedziach papieża Franciszka*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 2018, No 3 (in publication). It would be good to need the present paper on the background of the previous one.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Francis, Video message to the participants of the International Theological Congress at the „Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina” (2015.09.01–03) [hereafter: Video], [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/pont-messages/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150903\\_videomessaggio-teologia-buenos-aires.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/pont-messages/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150903_videomessaggio-teologia-buenos-aires.html) [access: 2019.03.08].

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Francis, *Apostolic exhortation "Evangelii gaudium"*, 7 [hereafter: EG]. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Encyclical "Deus caritas est"*, 1; Aparecida. V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean. Concluding document *We are disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ so that our nations may have life in Him*, 12. 243 [hereafter: A].

<sup>4</sup> G. Weigel, *Ten Things To Know About Pope Francis*, <https://youtu.be/eQY-2IocqzM>, 24 min. 34 sek. [access: 2019.03.08].

and to a desire for evangelization (EG 8). The importance of a personal relationship with the Lord for the faith was demonstrated by St John – for the evangelist to believe in Jesus is to accept Him personally in one’s life, to join Him and to follow Him.<sup>5</sup> The Apostle Paul, in turn, showed the novelty of the Christian existence, who, having accepted the love offered to him in Christ, was in a way identified with Him: “And now it is not me who lives, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20) (LF 21).

Since a personal encounter with Jesus is necessary for faith, it is also necessary for theology as a knowledge of faith (*scientia fidei*). In the encyclical begun by his predecessor,<sup>6</sup> *Lumen fidei* the Successor of St. Peter presents faith as an opportunity to participate in the knowledge of Christ himself. “In faith, Christ is not simply the one in whom we believe” but also “the one with whom we are united precisely in order to believe.” Christian “Faith does not merely gaze at Jesus, but sees things as Jesus himself sees them, with his own eyes,” in other words, “it is a participation in his way of seeing.” (LF 18).

If Catholic theology dares to reflect on the mystery of God, it is only possible because the Word has really become flesh. The Incarnate One, having accepted human nature, also looked at the Father in a human way. The Christian life is living the mysteries of one’s life in union with Christ, and even more: letting Him live His mysteries in us.<sup>7</sup> The believer becomes a “new creature” because he receives a filial existence (he is a “son in the Son”) and is therefore allowed to participate in the way of seeing of the Incarnate himself (LF 19).<sup>8</sup> “Faith accepted with the heart” (Rom 10:10) means that in the depths of man, truth and love are united, and the Holy Spirit, by transforming man from within, enables a new form of knowledge of all reality (LF 26):

The Christian can see with the eyes of Jesus and share in his mind, his filial disposition, because he or she shares in his love, which is the Spirit. In the love of Jesus, we receive in a certain way his vision. Without being conformed to him in love, without the presence of the Spirit, it is impossible to confess him as Lord (cf. *1 Cor* 12:3). (LF 21)

In connection with all this, the former great chancellor of the Argentinean university notes that one who does not want to develop the sentiments of the

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Francis, *Encyclical “Lumen fidei”*, 18 [hereafter: LF].

<sup>6</sup> The knowledge of Francis’ thought makes us look back on the statement of only a few thoughts added to the almost completed sketch of the encyclical by its predecessor (LF 7); this document has a clear outline of the work of the present successor of St. Peter.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Francis, *Apostolic exhortation “Gaudete et Exultate”*, 20 [hereafter: GE]; *The Catechism of the Catholic Church 521* [*Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, Poznań 2009].

<sup>8</sup> Cf. LF 46 – the Christian learns in the Lord’s prayer “to share the spiritual experience of Christ himself and begins to see through the eyes of Christ”.

Son (Video) cannot be a theologian.<sup>9</sup> The Bishop of Rome referred to this subject during his meeting with the participants of the Congress of the Church in Italy, when he compared Christian humanism to the humanism of the feelings of the Incarnate Word (cf. Phil 2:3–8). Among the three feelings born from the humanity of the Son of God, the Pope included: humility, selflessness and the feeling of blessing expressed in the attitude of life, for which the eight Beatitudes are a signpost.<sup>10</sup> The Beatitudes are “a Christian’s identity card” and “in the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master” (GE 63),<sup>11</sup> so it is in union with Him that the theologian gains knowledge.

## HE IS EXISTENTIALLY ORTHODOX

The Pope many times warned against the ideologization of faith; for instance, in a conversation with a French interviewer: “These are ideological Christians. They profess a Christian ideology. Or, if you prefer, Christian doctrine. They know the catechism by heart. They even know Denzinger by heart. Jesus, on the contrary.”<sup>12</sup> It is impossible not to refer these words to theologians whose ability to memorize, incidentally, was overestimated by Francis. The rhetorical hyperbole used by the Successor of St. Peter must probably be taken as a call to examine one’s conscience: it is difficult not to admit that there is a problem with the gap between being orthodox in theoretical reflection (an orthodox theologian) and being, so to speak, orthodox in life (the right faith of a disciple of Christ). Practical (life) relativism is considered by Francis to be more dangerous than theoretical (doctrinal) relativism, and the care to avoid doctrinal errors, the Pope believes, should be accompanied by an adequate watch over the faithfulness of the Christian way of life (EG 80, 194).<sup>13</sup>

Such an opinion seems to correlate with the fact that theory and practice diverge to such an extent that it leads to the practice of theology in a way that no longer serves the reality brought by God, but is merely the creation of abstract

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. EG 198. The Pope speaks not only of the feelings of Christ, but also of the emotionality with which he experienced the events of his earthly life – cf. Francis, *Apostolic Exh. “Amoris laetitia”* 144 [hereafter: AL].

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Francis, Speech at the meeting with the participants of the Italian Church Congress, Florence, 2015.11.10, [https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/franciszek\\_i/przemowienia/kongres\\_kosciola\\_10112015.html](https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/franciszek_i/przemowienia/kongres_kosciola_10112015.html) [hereafter: MKN] [access: 2019.03.08].

<sup>11</sup> For a papal discussion of the role of the blessings in the pursuit of holiness of life, see GE 67–94.

<sup>12</sup> Franciszek, D. Wolton, *Otwieranie drzwi. Rozmowy o Kościele i świecie*, transl. M. Chojnacki, Kraków 2018, p. 233.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Francis, *Enc. “Laudato si’”* 122 [hereafter: LS].

theories (in spite of the criterion of “reality more important than an idea” often invoked by the Pope). (EG 231–233; EG 110, 201). As referring to God, faith has a higher unity than that which can be worked out by human thought (LF 47), so Revelation cannot be identified with the rational articulation of faith. Hence Francis’ renewed opposition to such theological concepts that lead to the “doctrination” of the Gospel or to its transformation into a collection of intellectual speculations (neognostic temptation), instead of remaining in the service of its proclamation (GE 41, 46; AL 49, 59).

It can be present within the Church, both among the laity in parishes and teachers of philosophy and theology in centres of formation. Gnostics think that their explanations can make the entirety of the faith and the Gospel perfectly comprehensible. They absolutize their own theories and force others to submit to their way of thinking. (GE 39).

We could speak, following Clemens Sedmak, about first order orthodoxy (existential orthodoxy) and second order orthodoxy (doctrinal orthodoxy). They are related to each other, but the first one must precede the second one at every stage of the theological process, and in no case must the orthodoxy of the second order be separated from the first one.<sup>14</sup> An non-authentic relationship with God cannot fail to affect the orthodoxy of a theologian who, even if he (“externally”) accepts and reflects upon the Church’s right faith, only causes “much movement on the surface, but the mind is neither deeply moved nor affected.” (GE 38).

Very interesting, also theologically, are the Pope’s opinions about the temptation of the heresy of Gnosticism, which is still threatening the people of the Church.<sup>15</sup> In Francis’ opinion, contemporary Gnostics “think of the intellect as separate from the flesh, and thus become incapable of touching Christ’s suffering flesh in others, locked up as they are in an encyclopaedia of abstractions.” In this way they disembodied the mystery and reach “a God without Christ, a Christ without the Church, a Church without her people” (GE 37).<sup>16</sup> For this reason, the Holy Father reminds ecclesial circles that the study and practice of science must be accompanied by charity for the brothers and sisters and by sharing with the poor (PUG):

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. C. Sedmak, *Kościół ubogich. Papież Franciszek i transformacja ortodoksji*, transl. D. Chabrajaska, Warszawa 2018, p. 271, 300, 307.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Placuit Deo* On Certain Aspects of Christian Salvation, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20180222\\_placuit-deo\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20180222_placuit-deo_en.html) [access: 2019.03.14]; S. Zatwardnicki, *Antygnostyczna kruczata Franciszka. Teologiczne wątki w napomnieniach papieża*, “Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny” 2018, No. 2 [to be printed].

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Francis, *Homily during the Mass in the House of St. Martha*, 11.11.2016, [https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/franciszek\\_i/homilie/swmarta\\_11112016.html](https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/franciszek_i/homilie/swmarta_11112016.html) [access: 2019.03.14].

No one must say that they cannot be close to the poor because their own lifestyle demands more attention to other areas. This is an excuse commonly heard in academic, business or professional, and even ecclesial circles. (EG 201)

Following St. Bonaventure, he emphasizes that true wisdom and mercy towards one's neighbour should not be separated (GE 46). Since Christ identified with them, there is no excuse for lack of commitment. The temptation to practice a "theory of mercy" is overcome by a concrete commitment. Therefore, the Holy Father expects from believers, not excluding theologians, the ingenuity of mercy.<sup>17</sup>

## HE IS INVOLVED IN EVANGELIZATION

The successor of St. Peter in his exhortation to preach the Gospel in the modern world called on the Church to make a "missionary choice." It is not only a matter of an external "addition" to the "normal" life of the Church, but of "pastoral and missionary conversion" and then of living according to the "missionary spirituality" which is to be expressed as an "evangelizing style" permeating the whole life and activity of the Church (EG 15, 18, 25, 25, 27, 78–80).<sup>18</sup> As a consequence, also the renewal of ecclesial studies, postulated by Francis, is consistently seen within the framework of the Church's missionary vocation:

This, then, is a good occasion to promote with thoughtful and prophetic determination the renewal of ecclesiastical studies at every level, as part of the new phase of the Church's mission, marked by witness to the joy born of encountering Jesus and proclaiming his Gospel, that I set before the whole People of God as a programme in *Evangelii Gaudium*.<sup>19</sup>

The Pope, of course, sees evangelization broadly: the Good News should reach all people, all dimensions of man and penetrate all cultures (EG 237;

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Francis, *Apost. Letter "Misericordia et misera"* 19–20 [hereafter: MM].

<sup>18</sup> Cf. GE 28; J. Baker, *Yes to Mission Spirituality*, "International Review of Mission" 104 (2015), No 2, p. 393. This "missionary paradigm" of the Church, which, avoiding auto-reference, goes to the peripheries, was earlier put forward in Aparecida – cf. A. Tornielli, *Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Franciszek. Biografia papieża*, transl. K. Kozak et al., Kielce 2013, p. 166.

<sup>19</sup> Francis, *Apostolic Constitution on Church Universities and Faculties "Veritatis gaudium"* 1 [henceforth VG]. Cf. EG 1, 17; Francis, *Address to the participants of the plenary session of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of New Evangelization* (29.09.2017), [https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/franciszek\\_i/przemowienia/ewangelizacja\\_29092017.html](https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/franciszek_i/przemowienia/ewangelizacja_29092017.html) [access: 2019.03.18]; A 341.

VG 2).<sup>20</sup> All teaching of doctrine should be done in the attitude of evangelization. The “first” preaching means a qualitative priority, not just a chronological one; the kerygma is the main message, important both for evangelization and Christian growth and formation (EG 42, 160, 164; AL 58). One of the four criteria for the contribution of ecclesial studies to the Church’s missionary program is “contemplation and spiritual, intellectual and existential introduction to the heart of the kerygma.” (VG 4a). This kerygmatic dimension should also give direction to the theological research, which should be part of the mission of salvation and healing (vision of the Church as a “field hospital”). Mercy as the central message of the Gospel implies that theological disciplines (including dogmatics) must reflect on faith in God who is love (UCA; AL 291, 310; MKN).<sup>21</sup>

The important question in this context is whether Francis expects theologians to be personally involved in the work of evangelization, not only through missionary theology, but also through missionary praxis? In response, it is worth quoting a statement addressed in 2014 to the community of the Pontifical Gregorian University and the members of the Pontifical Biblical Institute:

Studies at every Pontifical University have an ecclesial purpose. Research and teaching should be connected with personal and community life, with missionary work (It. *con l'impegno missionario*), with fraternal love and sharing with the poor, with caring for an interior life in relationship with the Lord.<sup>22</sup>

The words about missionary commitment appear in the direct context of the emphasized relationship between studies and spiritual life (It. *rapporto tra studio e vita*). Every Christian is required to understand life as a mission and to allow every action to identify the follower with Christ and to lead to His being reflected

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Paul VI, *Apostl. Exhortation “Evangelii nuntiandii”* 17; Francis, *Discorso del Santo Padre Francesco ai partecipanti al pellegrinaggio della diocesi Brescia* (22.06.2013), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130622\\_pellegrinaggio-diocesi-brescia.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2013/june/documents/papa-francesco_20130622_pellegrinaggio-diocesi-brescia.html) [access: 2019.03.16]; K. Lemna, D.H. Delaney, *Three Pathways into the Theological Mind of Pope Francis*, “Nova et Vetera” [eng. edition] 2014, No 1, p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> Francis [Franciszek], *Bóg jest młody. Rozmowa z Thomasem Leoncinim*, transl. O. Styczeń, Kraków 2018, p. 129; A. Tornielli, op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>22</sup> Francis, *Discorso alla Comunità della Pontificia Università Gregoriana e ai Consociati del Pontificio Istituto Biblico e del Pontificio Istituto Orientale*, 10 April 2014, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/april/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140410\\_universita-consortium-gregoriana.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/april/documents/papa-francesco_20140410_universita-consortium-gregoriana.html) [access: 2019.03.01] [hereafter: PUG]. [Polish transl.: Przemówienie do wspólnoty Papieskiego Uniwersytetu Gregoriańskiego oraz instytutów stowarzyszonych *Teolodzy na klęczkach i z umysłem otwartym* (10.04.2014), “L’Osservatore Romano” (Polish ed.) 2014, No 5, p. 25].



in the life of the disciple of the Lord (GE 23.28). In addition to the “witness of life” everybody is called to direct evangelization:

Today, as the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers. This is the informal preaching which takes place in the middle of a conversation, something along the lines of what a missionary does when visiting a home. Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey” (EG 127).

If the evangelization “person to person” concerns Christians in general, then also theologians, as disciples–missionaries (EG 120) should not excuse themselves from it.

## HE KNEELS BEFORE GOD AND SERVES HUMANITY

Let us articulate directly what has already been signalled before: the Pope means an inseparable union between science and spiritual life, theological reflection inseparable from the love for Christ and the Church:

Your intellectual effort in teaching and research, in study and in wider formation will be all the more fruitful and effective if it is animated by love for Christ and for the Church, the stronger and more harmonious the bond between study and prayer (It. *la relazione tra studio e preghiera*). This is not an ancient matter, it is the essence! (PUG).

Theology can only be practiced with an open mind and on one’s knees. It is not about a pious introduction to theology, but about a constant dynamism between reflection and prayer, so as to think while praying and pray while thinking. Only through prayer does the heart humbly face *Deus semper maior*, and the mind gains clarity of knowledge and openness to God who is always greater. And without worship or prayer, the theologian falls into narcissism, which according to the Pope’s diagnosis is a disease of the Church (VG 3; UCA; PUG).

On the other hand, the Bishop of Rome stresses that “contemplation that neglects others is a deception” (EG 281), and a spirituality focused only on interior experiences would lead to “seeking refuge in some false spirituality,” becoming “justification to avoid involvement in mission.” This situation “ill accords with the



demands of charity, to say nothing of the implications of the incarnation.” (EG 262<sup>23</sup>). Similarly, the theologian cannot fail to include in the synthesis of prayer and doctrine those for whose salvation God has become man. So the third of the main characteristics of the identity of a person involved in the doctrine of faith is to be a prophet who, by keeping alive the consciousness of the past, has to offer the hope of the future. In a way, he or she places the sorrow and anguish of modern man in prayer and theological reflection under the gaze of the Risen and glorified Christ, who makes everything new (cf. Rev 21:5). Taking Tradition seriously, he or she sees in it a living river capable of irrigating “here and now” (Video; PUG; GS1)<sup>24</sup>.

It becomes clear what the Holy Father means when he requires theologians “not to be content with a desk-bound theology.” (EG 133). A warning against practising theology “from behind a desk” means avoiding being closed in the “glass castle” of academic disputes detached from people’s lives and needs. The proper place for theological reflection is remaining on the border of Revelation and the life of believers. Otherwise, the scholar will become a “museum theologian,” who will not be able to communicate the collected data of Revelation to those to whom it is addressed – thus becoming a “bureaucrat of the sacrum” (UCA).<sup>25</sup>

For Francis, perhaps one of the most important guidelines of the Council appears to be the call for the “Church on the Way” to walk on of the paths of modern man. The People of God, making its pilgrimage in history, becomes “the handmaid of humanity”. It accompanies the mankind’s experiences, bending over like a Samaritan and illuminating people’s pilgrimage with the light of the Gospel. The Pope also expects the ecclesial studies to contribute to this task.<sup>26</sup> Theological faculties, therefore, in addition to explaining God’s revelation, are invited to seek solutions to human problems in the light of this divine revelation, to become

<sup>23</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Apost. Letter “Novo millennio ineunte”* 52; 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World “Gaudium et spes”* 34 [hereafter: GS]; A 148.

<sup>24</sup> The image of Tradition as a living water connecting with the source comes from the predecessor – cf. Benedict XVI, General audience (2006.04.26), [https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/benedykt\\_xvi/audiencje/ag\\_26042006.html](https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/benedykt_xvi/audiencje/ag_26042006.html) [access: 2018.11.05]; L. Feingold, *Faith Comes From What is Heard. An Introduction to Fundamental Theology*, Steubenville 2016, p. 215–217. On the prophetic role of a theologian according to the theology of liberation – cf. M. Tomaszewski, *Błogosławieni ubodzy. Teologia w służbie wyzwolenia*, in: *Kościół Franciszka*, ed. P. Artemiuk, Płock 2014, p. 54.

<sup>25</sup> „The notion of not «doing» theology at the «desk» but on the frontier is probably more Jesuit than Dominican” – observes James V. Schall, a jesuit, in the article *On Pope Francis and Understanding Theology*, <https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2015/03/30/on-pope-francis-and-understanding-theology/> [access: 2019.03.02].

<sup>26</sup> VG 1–2; LF 6; EG 24; Francis, *Discorso del Santo Padre Francesco ai partecipanti al pellegrinaggio della diocesi Brescia* (22.06.2013), art. cit. Cf. A 135; G.L. Müller, *Ubóstwo*, transl. S. Śledziwski, Lublin 2014, p. 108.

a “cultural laboratory” in which there should be an interpretation of the reality that flows from the event of Christ and is nourished by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit (“evangelical hermeneutics”).<sup>27</sup>

## HE CONTEMPLATES THE WORD OF GOD AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The Pope recalls the conciliar comparison of studying the Holy Scripture to the soul of theology, and connects the study of inspired books with the participation in liturgy, as the source of Christian life. He also urges not to separate the soul from the “body” – he means the study of Tradition in a dialogue with “today” (VG 2).<sup>28</sup>

Great respect for the Word can be seen in the beautiful part of the *Evangelii Gaudium* dedicated to preaching. Although the papal exhortation is directed to preachers, the theologian can also read practical advice on how to submit to the primacy of the Word of God. Francis recommends an openness to the Holy Spirit and a humble recognition of oneself as a servant of the Word – an astonishment full of reverence is to protect against attempts at manipulation or reign (a warning against deriving theological ideas from passages that had a different purpose in God’s intention). He emphasizes personal intimacy with the Word of God, the readiness to be “wounded” by it, to question one’s previous life, to be possessed by it, and holiness (but not immaculateness) in the reading of inspired books (EG 146, 149–152). He explains to the French interviewer that the Gospel should be read without prejudice or ready-made ideas, with an open soul, accepting its message as something new which should move us.<sup>29</sup>

I believe that these words call on theologians to examine their consciences; indirectly, they can be an accusation of a certain tendency that can still be observed in exegetical–theological research, which gives the impression that the Bible is not for mortals, but only for the “new Magisterium” of experts.<sup>30</sup> The Holy Father, therefore, while appreciating the value of the principles of interpretation<sup>31</sup> and commentaries, sometimes prefers to accept the Word *sine glossa* – in defence of

<sup>27</sup> VG 3; VG, Part II – Particular Regulations, Tit. I, art. 69.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council, *Decree on Priestly Training* “*Optatum totius*” 16.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Otwieranie drzwi...*, p. 288–289.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Sól ziemi. Chrześcijaństwo i Kościół katolicki na przełomie tysiącleci. Z kardynałem rozmawia Peter Seewald*, transl. G. Sowinski, Kraków 1997, p. 229; J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *Raport o stanie wiary. Z Ks. Kardynałem Josephem Ratzingerem rozmawia Vittorio Messori*, transl. Z. Oryszyn, J. Chrapek, Kraków–Warszawa 1986, p. 65.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. reference to the literary analysis and canonical exegesis in EG 147–148.

both the sharpness of the “sword” and the sweetness of the “honey” of the Word, and to ensure that the message of the Good News is not watered down (GE 97, 156). This applies especially to mercy towards others:

This message is so clear and direct, so simple and eloquent, that no ecclesial interpretation has the right to relativize it. [...] Why complicate something so simple? Conceptual tools exist to heighten contact with the realities they seek to explain, not to distance us from them.” (EG 194)

It is characteristic of the St. Peter’s Successor to point to the context in which the Word of God should be listened to – it is about the life of the people and the needs of history, into which the Gospel is to be introduced (EG 95–96, 154–155; Video<sup>32</sup>). The Word of God serves the dialogue between God and His people; through Scripture the Bridegroom speaks to his Bride (MM 6–7). Since the same Holy Spirit, under whose inspiration the Bible books were written, also works in the faithful, the preacher of the Word must be a contemplative man of both the Word and the People of God (EG 139, 154). This call also applies to theologians who are to hear the “prophecy of the brothers” (EG 97). Incidentally, “The People of God has a good nose”<sup>33</sup> and the smell of sheep – the fruit of *sensus fidei* – makes it possible to recognize new paths (EG 31, 119):

The questions of our people, their suffering, their battles, their dreams, their trials, their worries possess an interpretational value that we cannot ignore if we want to take the principle of the Incarnation seriously. Their wondering helps us to wonder ourselves, their questions question us. All this helps us to delve into the mystery of the Word of God, the Word that requires and asks that we dialogue, that we enter into communion (VG 6; cf. Video).

Being the son of the people, in whom the theologian was born and from whose faith he draws, and the resulting acceptance of the theological value of the people, was recognized by the Pope as one of the three main characteristics of the theologian. The Bishop of Rome believes that theology, which is not born within the People, cannot be true (Video; GE 44). If all the faithful are endowed with an “instinct of faith” to understand God’s reality intuitively (EG 119), then within the framework of the People of God a privileged place belongs to the poor members,

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<sup>32</sup> Por. Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 43, 63.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Otwieranie drzwi...*, s. 59.

who appear to be *locus theologicus* (EG 198)<sup>34</sup>, because of their access to Christ suffering. A good theologian, like a shepherd, should have the smell of people and the street, and like a Samaritan, pour wine and oil on human wounds (UCA; EG 24).<sup>35</sup> For the Lord is to be met in the street – He is active in the world and already acts in his people, saving them (MKN; Video; GE 135).<sup>36</sup>

## THE SPIRITUALITY OF A THEOLOGIAN

According to the International Theological Commission, the effort of knowing the living God will mark the life of a theologian, and theological research must purify his/her mind and heart. The nature of theology as a *scientia Dei* is matched by a spirituality whose integral elements include: “love for the truth, readiness to convert ones heart and mind, striving for holiness and commitment to mission and ecclesial communion.”<sup>37</sup> Looking at this background, what is the characteristics of the theological spirituality proposed by Pope Francis?

(1) The Commission reminds that one of the fundamental criteria of Catholic theology is to accept the faith of the Church as the source, context and norm. Theology combines the *fides qua* and *fides quae* (TD 15), so that the study of *fides quae* is possible only if one lives by the *fides qua*.<sup>38</sup> God’s truth is not, as highlight-

<sup>34</sup> Cf. J.C. Scannone, *Pope Francis and the Theology of the People*, „Theological Studies” 2016, No 1, p. 123. According to this advocate of the Argentinean theology of liberation, the man who largely theologially shaped Pope Francis, within the framework of the so-called “theology of the people” the religion of the “faithful people of God” becomes a key place for theological reflection. – cf. ibidem, p. 118,123. Cf. M. Tomaszewski, art. cit., p. 53–54; G. O’Collins, *Rethinking fundamental theology. Toward a New Fundamental Theology*, Oxford 2011, p. 324. Cf. also the opinion of the Pope emeritus: “there is a mysterious connection between the mentality of a simpleton and cognition”, which is based on sonship, an attitude opposed to being an ‘adult’.” – J. Ratzinger, *Bóg Jezusa Chrystusa. Medytacje o Bogu Trójjedynym*, transl. J. Zychowicz, Kraków 1995, p. 91.

<sup>35</sup> Thus carrying to people the scent of the presence of Jesus – cf. EG 169.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. EG 268: “To be evangelizers of souls, we need to develop a spiritual taste for being close to people’s lives and to discover that this is itself a source of greater joy. Mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people. [...] He takes us from the midst of his people and he sends us to his people; without this sense of belonging we cannot understand our deepest identity.”

<sup>37</sup> The International Theological Commission, *Theology Today [Teologia dzisiaj. Perspektywy, zasady i kryteria]* (2012), transl. K. Stopa, Kraków 2012, p. 93 (the quote and the paraphrase) [henceforth: TD]. The Commission refers in a footnote to the encyclical Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate* 1 (it speaks of “love in truth” and of the bond between love and truth).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. “*Sensus fidei*” w życiu Kościoła. Dokument Międzynarodowej Komisji Teologicznej (2014), transl. M. Moskal, Kraków 2015, 10; idem, *Urząd Nauczycielski Kościoła i teologia* (1975), Komentarz do tezy 7 (O. Semmelroth), transl. J. Królikowski, in: *Od wiary do teologii. Dokumenty Międzynarodowej Komisji Teologicznej 1969–1996*, ed. J. Królikowski, Kraków 2000, p. 52–69; C. Vagaggini, *Teologia. Pluralizm teologiczny*, transl. J. Partyka, Kraków 2005, p. 18–19.

ed in No. 95 of *Theology Today*, merely something studied in systematic reflection and deductive reasoning, but is experienced through participation in Christ, the wisdom of God (cf. 1 Cor 1:30).

Francis emphasizes the living faith, which is based on a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, without which, consistently, it is not possible to practice *scientia fidei*. Of course, the Pope has repeatedly stressed that this is about an ecclesial form of faith,<sup>39</sup> but this emphasis on personal experience seems to me to be the most significant. The theologian lives in union with the Lord and even allows the Lord to make His mysteries live within himself. In this way he is allowed to participate in the knowledge of Christ himself – he looks through his eyes (again: this would not be possible without faith professed from within the Church<sup>40</sup>). Whoever can live without Christ cannot be a theologian. When a theologian lives in communion with the Lord, he has the “mind of Christ” (cf. 1 Cor 2:16) and the feelings of the Son who became man develop in him. Through the Holy Spirit, the theologian, united with Christ, receives a share in the filial way of knowing the Father.<sup>41</sup>

(2) The vocation of the theologian must be seen in the context of service in the Church, which implies the need to maintain relationships with all the members of the Body of Christ. The theologian must seek to conform his life to the mystery of the Eucharist – if it is the source and summit of Church life and evangelization, it must also be the source and summit of theology (TD 94).

In the context of the Eucharist, the Holy Father poses the radical challenge of “recognizing” the Body of the Lord not only in sacramental signs but also in community (cf. 1 Cor 11:29). He even states that the Eucharist is received in an unworthy way if it does not stimulate mission and commitment on behalf of the poor and suffering (AL 185–186; A 142, 251).<sup>42</sup> For Francis, the poor are almost the “eighth sacrament,” in which Christ is encountered, and for the theologian they also become a “theological place,” because they know Christ in a way that is not accessible to the one who just practices science. Whoever, in theological reflection, would like to use a “mind without incarnation,” detached from the “body” of others, especially those in need, would fall into neognostic temptation. The theologian is called to practice not only the theory but also the “practice of mercy.”

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. LF 36, 39; AL 2.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. LF 22: “Faith is necessarily ecclesial; it is professed from within the body of Christ as a concrete communion of believers. [...] For those who have been transformed in this way, a new way of seeing opens up, faith becomes light for their eyes.”

<sup>41</sup> *Sequela Christi* proves indispensable for the process of getting to know God – cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia Benedicta*, vol. I, Katowice 2010, p. 65–68, 127.

<sup>42</sup> The social character of the mysticism of the sacrament of the Eucharist was already pointed out by Francis’ predecessor – cf. Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est* 14.

The Successor of St. Peter demands from a Catholic theologian an existential orthodoxy, not just a doctrinal one. The latter cannot exist without the former; and the former means living in accordance with the Christian faith. Of course, in papal statements we should not try to find giving priority to ortho-praxis over orthodoxy,<sup>43</sup> but rather, following Gerhard Ludwig Müller, we should say that orthodoxy means the participation of believers in the praxis of God.<sup>44</sup> Orthodox theology must remain faithful to the central message of the Gospel, which the Pope considers to be mercy.<sup>45</sup> Without participation in the work of the Word made man “for our salvation” (*propter nostram salutem*), one does not reach the object/subject of theological reflection. The condition *sine qua non* of fruitful theological orthodoxy is existential orthodoxy.

(3) The papal call to personal involvement in the work of evangelization is also loud and powerful. It is not enough to assume that theology itself, while remaining at the service of the Church, fits in the broadly understood missionary vocation of the *Ecclesia*. If the components of the theologian’s spirituality mentioned in the study *Theology Today* include commitment to mission, then, in the opinion of the Holy Father, theologian must be expected to take an active (personal) part in evangelization. It is about an existential rooting in the heart of the kerygma that will express itself as a direct service of preaching the Good News, which in turn will also mark the *intellectus fidei* he practises. The spirituality of the theologian is therefore inscribed in the “missionary spirituality” proposed to the whole “outreaching Church.” The personal life of the ecclesial faith is realized when the Church in her members can be what she is in her essence – the missionary Church.<sup>46</sup>

To put it simply, it is also about direct evangelization, and therefore also about street evangelization or home evangelization. What about the fact that it is not easy to imagine today a theologian engaged in this kind of evangelization “face to face?”. And what if it is precisely then that he receives perhaps the most essential access to a profound experience of faith, without which *scientia fidei* is impossible? Or, in even sharper terms: can one sermonize about God at all without personal participation in the mission of salvation for which God became man? It is worth recalling at this point Joseph Ratzinger’s statement that after the Ascension the reign of Christ is realized in the form of the humble Word; the mode in which

<sup>43</sup> See the warning of Joseph Ratzinger: “There is no good deed without knowing what is right. Will without knowledge is blind and similarly action, orthopraxis, without knowledge becomes blind and leads to a precipice” – *W drodze do Jezusa Chrystusa*, transl. J. Merecki, Kraków 2004, p. 118.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. T. Rowland, *Catholic Theology*, London–Oxford–New York–New Delhi–Sydney 2017, p. 190–191.

<sup>45</sup> AL 49, 59. Cf. *Otwieranie drzwi...*, p. 83: “I believe that mercy is the center of the Gospel.”

<sup>46</sup> „He is completely a man of the new evangelization” – this is how George Weigel characterizes the Pope – cf. *Ten Things To Know About Pope Francis...*, 31 min. 58 s. [access: 2019.03.08].

the Risen One's is present is precisely the gift of the Spirit and the task of witnessing, preaching and mission.<sup>47</sup> This is confirmed by all those involved in the work of evangelization, that it is in the proclamation that one experiences the God, in whom the *scientia Dei* is interested.

(4) In the conviction of the International Theological Commission, theology must recognize the absolute primacy of God – not so much to try to possess Him as to be possessed by Him. To this end, the theologian will not only pay attention to the “knowledge of the saints”, but will himself strive for holiness. The relationship between the two forms of supernatural Christian wisdom (theological and mystical) exists not only within the entire Church community, but also in the individual life of the theologian. The awareness of the transcendence of God and of the ultimate Truth must be matched by the recognition of the limits of the theological knowledge (TD 60, 86, 96, 96, 92, 99). The Holy Father makes similarly strong demands saying:

God cannot be reduced to an object. He is a subject who makes himself known and perceived in an interpersonal relationship. Right faith orients reason to open itself to the light which comes from God, so that reason, guided by love of the truth, can come to a deeper knowledge of God. [...] Theology thus demands the humility to be ‘touched’ by God, admitting its own limitations before the mystery, while striving to investigate, with the discipline proper to reason, the inexhaustible riches of this mystery (LF 36).

Francis also draws attention to the inseparable connection between the knowledge of faith and the spiritual life or even sanctity. The mind of a theologian, open to *Deus semper maior*, finds its counterpart in prayer on one's knees – in the whole process of theological research, thinking and prayer are to be in harmony. And the awareness of the greatness of God will make it possible to reject the (Gnostic) temptation to identify Revelation with the theological articulation of faith. *Scientia Dei* remains in the service of life – theology is to lead to a more perfect response to God's love. Therefore, science and holiness (theory and practice) seem to be an inseparable binomial (GE 45; UCA; Video).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Opera omnia*, VI/2: *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii*, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2015, p. 788.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council (DH 806): „quia inter creatorem et creaturam non potest tanta similitudo notari, quin inter eos maior sit dissimilitudo notanda”. The gnostic God becomes locked in the “fettters of the mind” – cf. E. Romero-Pose, *Pokusa gnozy wczoraj i dziś*, transl. G. Ostrowski, “Communio” 1998, No. 4, p. 3–16, p. 13. On the relationship between theology and holiness – cf. J. Ratzinger, *Prawda w teologii*, transl. M. Mijalska, Kraków 2001, p. 65; H. Urs von Balthasar, *Teologia a świętość*, transl. M. Serzycki, in: *Podstawy wiary – teologia* (Kolekcja Communio 6), ed. L. Balter, Poznań 1991, p. 424, 426–427, 429–431; J. Szymik, op. cit., p. 138.



The International Theological Commission has already tried to respond to the gap between theological reflection and believers, between too rationalistic reflection and spiritual life (TD 68, 86, 89). According to the Commission, “the whole Church lives, so to speak, on the border between the Gospel and everyday life” (TD 52). The statements of St. Peter’s successor can be interpreted from this perspective of “bridging” the gap between theory and practice, which would concern both the whole theology and the theologian himself. The papal expectation for the theologian to be on the verge of Revelation and reality is inscribed in Francis’ interpretation of the Second Vatican Council. In his interpretation, *Vaticanum Secundum* overcame the dissonance between theology and pastoral care and revolutionized the status of theology: the encounter of doctrine and pastoral care becomes constitutive for it (VG 2; Video).<sup>49</sup> For the spirituality of the theologian, this means that his personal prayer is marked by intercession through his neighbour (GE 154), and contemplation, if it is to be consistent with the logic of the Incarnation, must be accompanied by prophetic action for the benefit of others. Integral spirituality will be expressed in contemplation also in the midst of action and in sanctification in the fulfilment of the mission (GE 26).

(5) The International Theological Commission in its document *Theology Today* stressed that one of the most important “criteria for Catholic theology is to recognize the primacy of the Word of God”. (TD 9). For the Holy Father “the soul of theology,” or study of Sacred Scripture, is connected with the liturgy and the relationship between Tradition and “today” – the living river must irrigate *hic et nunc*. In the context of the “spirituality of the theologian,” noteworthy is the stress put on the role of personal intimacy with the Word of God and the warning against “ecclesiastical hermeneutics” relativizing the message of the Good News.

The Pope places as much emphasis on contemplation of the Word of God, as on the need to contemplate the People of God, in whose womb it originated and to whom it has been addressed. In Francis’ view, from a seriously taken principle of the Incarnation it follows that the questions and struggles of the people have a “hermeneutical value.” The Holy Spirit himself, in the praying faithful, is the subject dealing with theology (Video), and the *sensus fidei* of the members of the people, first of all the “last ones,” becomes a *locus theologicus* for the theologian.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Cf. R. Shields, *A Disturbing Pope, Cardinal Newman, and the Voice of the Faithful*, “Cross Currents” 4 (2016), p. 416. Also the document *Theology Today* stresses that dialogue with the world is one of the criteria of Catholic theology – TD 51–58.

<sup>50</sup> The International Theological Commission also refers to the supernatural sense of faith (*sensus fidei*) of the whole People of God, through which a deep understanding of spiritual reality is possible. Therefore, the sense of fidelity becomes for the theologian the *locus* of his work – TD 33–36; *Sensus fidei* 81, 83.

Once again: it is not so much a matter of theoretical recognition as of practicing theology in direct contact with the People. As the whole Church “on her way” is called upon to walk the paths of modern man, and within the Church’s framework also theological faculties, so the spirituality of the “theologian of today” includes being permeated with the odour of people and the street.

## “ADHORTATIO” INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

For those accustomed to identifying theology with faith seeking understanding (*fides quarens intellectum scientificum*) it is not easy to affirm the other two theological styles, referred to by Gerald O’Collins: *fides quarens iustitiam sociale*m and *fides quarens adorationem*.<sup>51</sup> This division proposed by the Australian theologian, however, can only be used indirectly to understand the challenges that Francis posed to the theologians. The Pope did not so much opt for the style from which he had grown, as he pointed out the interrelation of the first type of theology with the other two. It is impossible to separate the practice of theology from the Christian life as a whole, and therefore also from contemplation<sup>52</sup> or care for one’s neighbour. Also, the division into dogmatic theology as intellectual penetration into the mysteries of faith and pastoral theology as applying this general understanding of systematic reflection to concrete situations only to a certain extent correlates with the Holy Father’s thought.<sup>53</sup> According to the Bishop of Rome, it is not only a matter of rejecting the false opposition between theology and pastoral care (Video), but also of taking into account the “feedback” and even, to a certain extent, of accepting the direction from pastoral commitment as an expression of orthodox faith towards the orthodox theological reflection which becomes possible as its result.

It is worth recalling here the experience of Cardinal Müller, who was transformed in his view of the theology of liberation through his participation in a seminar led by Gustav Gutiérrez (1988). Direct encounters with people and contact with the situation in which they lived allowed the professor of theology to become convinced that the theological current that had arisen in Latin America remained orthodox because of his orthopractical attitude. From now on, he used his breaks in his academic work to serve the poor, the oppressed and those in danger.<sup>54</sup> This proved fruitful, as he himself testifies, for his understanding of “what theology is,

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. G. O’Collins, op. cit., p. 326.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. C. Vagaggini, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>53</sup> The Benedictine Guy Mansini is an example of such an understanding of their relationship – cf. *Fundamental theology*, Washington 2018, p. 265.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. G.L. Müller, *Ubostwo*, transl. S. Śledziewski, Lublin 2014, p. 28–30, 68–69, 76–78.

going beyond the mere ‘passive’ and theoretical, scientific and academic character.” He concluded that “it is impossible to speak of God without an active, transforming and therefore practical participation in a complex and integral liberating activity initiated by Him.”<sup>55</sup>

Polish theologians have such an enormous esteem for the former prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that sometimes I have the impression that for them he is a greater authority than the Pope himself. So they could follow in the footsteps of the Cardinal and take up the missionary challenge posed by Francis. Street evangelization or service to the needy for many would turn out to be a renewal of the relationship with Christ or a chance for the first personal experience of meeting him, which would have a positive impact on the *intellectus fidei*. Who knows, perhaps the “side effects” of the commitment and the associated *methanoia* would be a remedy for the disease of theology separated from believers by a gap, as the diagnosis made by the International Theological Commission puts it (TD 95).

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<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, p. 68, 70.

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**Keywords:** Pope Francis, identity of a theologian, spirituality of a theologian, missionary spirituality, encounter with Christ, living faith, evangelization, existential orthodoxy, Word of God, People of God

## TEOLOG DZISIAJ. TOŻSAMOŚĆ I DUCHOWOŚĆ TEOLOGA W WYPOWIEDZIACH PAPIEŻA FRANCISZKA

### Streszczenie

Autor uporządkował wypowiedzi papieża Franciszka kreślące portret teologa, następnie na ich podstawie scharakteryzował duchowość uprawiającego *scientia fidei*. Teolog według Ojca Świętego spotkał Chrystusa osobiście i nie może bez Niego żyć. Zjednoczony z Synem uczestniczy w Jego poznaniu Ojca. Następca św. Piotra domaga się od katolickiego teologa ortodoksji egzystencjalnej, która jest warunkiem *sine qua non* uprawiania ortodoksyjnej teologii. Duchowość teologa wpisuje się w zaproponowaną całemu Kościołowi „duchowość misyjną”; teolog winien osobiście włączyć się w dzieło ewangelizacji. Papież podkreśla również związek nauki wiary z życiem duchowym czy wprost ze świętością. Otwarty na *Deus semper maior* teolog modli się na kolanach, ale w modlitwę włącza sprawy ludzi; jego refleksja znajduje się na granicy Objawienia i rzeczywistości. Duszą teologii jawi się nie tylko słuchanie Słowa Bożego, ale również wzięcie pod uwagę „hermeneutycznej wartości” Ludu Bożego. Franciszek namawia do porzucenia uprawiania teologii jedynie „za biurka”. Do duchowości teologa zaliczyć trzeba gotowość na przeniknięcie zapachem ludzi i ulicy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** papież Franciszek, tożsamość teologa, duchowość teologa, duchowość misyjna, spotkanie z Chrystusem, żywa wiara, ewangelizacja, ortodoksja egzystencjalna, Słowo Boże, Lud Boży