

## ANTHROPOLOGY & ETHICS

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# Sport in the Teachings of Pope Francis: Problems, Research Perspectives and Discourses

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### Abstract

**Background.** The connections between religion and sport can be seen both in the everyday lives of individual sportspeople and fans and in the sphere of symbols and rituals. The debate in Poland, in contrast to international debate, is dominated by a Christian approach, which stems from Poland's sociocultural background.

**Problem and aim.** This article is part of the implicit discourse in sports science about the relationship between religion and sport and focuses on Pope Francis' teachings, which have recently become a subject of research.

**Methods.** The article is based on a review of subject literature, secondary research and other source materials, with particular focus on a book by Zbigniew Dziubinski entitled *Sport in the Service of the Person and Community from the Perspective of Pope Francis*.  
**Results.** Pope Francis defines sport through an attributive approach based on the typical features of sport. Self-denial is an aspect of asceticism, which is characteristic of Christianity and other religious and spiritual traditions. However, the point of self-denial is not the abandonment of health, but rather, a harmonious development in which the spirit predominates over the body. Modern interpretations of biblical teachings are fundamentally consistent with the current paradigm in sports science in that they support respect for the human body and health. Pope Francis refers in his teachings to every 'dark side' of sport proposed as part of methodological dysfunctionality. This article confronts different pathologies and dysfunctions with universal categories, such as equality, solidarity, respect and fair play, which make up the Christian outlook on sport.

**Conclusions.** Spiritual and sport values create a harmonious combination. The early C20<sup>th</sup> marks the beginning of the most fruitful period of cooperation between the Catholic Church and sport in history. Pope Francis is well aware that sport is a very diverse and multidimensional construct. Even so, his view on sport is unilaterally positive. He also believes that its potential should be used properly, i.e. for the benefit of the individual and society.

### Introduction

The relationship between religion and sport is a contentious topic. What can supernatural belief have in common with exercises designed to build physical fitness and competitive games played to achieve a high score? As civilisation developed, various forms of games appeared alongside religious beliefs and rituals; for instance, in the lands conquered by the Celts, in Central Asia and in the Far East [Liponski 2012; Giulanotti 2005]. The ancient Olympic Games also had a religious foundation [Papantoniou 2008]. Ancient Greece maintained a lively sporting tradition thanks to the moral standards established by the population's religious ideals and rituals. Thus, sport gained social approval and protection

from attempts at its elimination. While it is true that the modern Olympic movement is nowhere near as strong as its ancient Greek equivalent, it should be underlined that the latter encompassed only a single circle of civilisation, meaning that its members were culturally and religiously homogenous [Liponski 2016].

Pierre de Coubertin, the father and 'inventor' [Firek 2020] of the modern Olympic movement, acknowledged that humankind would never be culturally and religiously united, and proposed the notion of a *religio athletae* (defined not so much as a 'sportsperson's religion', but a 'sportsperson's credo'). This notion was not founded on any of the most widespread (Christianity, Islam and Judaism) or other recognisable spiritual and religious traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism and Taoism),

but instead originated from a set of moral standards shared by all cultures that overlap with religious standards and are expressed through organised sports competition. In other words, Coubertin proposed a universal 'ethical faith' [Liponski 2016]. He attempted to sacralise the Olympic Games, although today, they are mostly being desacralised through the quasi-religious, secular ritual offered by sport. Consequently, while contemporary sport mimics the religious functionality, it is difficult to imagine a situation in which sport could completely replace religion [Krawczyk 2000]. As with religious rites, sports rituals are treated seriously and take place in an orderly, formalised and socially reproducible manner, during a dedicated festive period. The hero of the ritual (the sports person) is a role model and a point of pride for the entire community, whether it is local, regional or national. Winners of the competitions are idolised or even mythologised [Mazurkiewicz 2014; Prebish 1992]. Diego Maradona, despite rampant controversies, attained the status of 'godhood' in Argentina, not only thanks to successfully leading his team to victory in the 1986 World Cup. In the quarterfinals against England, Maradona scored two deciding goals (2:1), one with his hand (monikered the 'Hand of God'), and the other after dribbling past several opponents. England's humiliating defeat was symbolic compensation for the Argentinians after losing the Falklands War four years earlier, and cemented Maradona's position as a national idol, later contributing to his image as a football legend. Thus, sport and religion can both give meaning to the life of an individual.

The connections between religion and sport can be seen both in the everyday lives of individual sportspersons and fans and in the sphere of symbols and rituals [Parry, Nesti, Watson 2011]. Poland, in contrast to the international debate, is dominated by a Christian approach, which stems from Poland's sociocultural background [Kossakowski 2017]. A significant part of the Polish subject literature consists of a collection of monographs published continuously from 1992 by the Salesian Sports Organisation and the University of Physical Education in Warsaw [e.g. Dziubinski 2007]. To date, 33 such monographs have been published, each written from a multidisciplinary perspective. Their authors represent different scientific centres and the monographs address topics related to the humanities, social sciences and sports science. Despite the aforementioned predominance of Christian thought, the publications also refer to other religious and spiritual traditions; for example, in the context of the Far Eastern martial arts [e.g. Cynarski 2019a]. Issues like ethos or general principles, ideas and goals underlying *karate*, *taekwondo* and other martial arts are discussed in *Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology* [e.g. Cynarski 2019b; Dziubinski 2020a].

Notable among these and other studies on the relationship between religion and sport [e.g. Kosiew-

icz 1998, Kowalczyk 2002, Jasny 2018] are the works of Zbigniew Dziubinski, who has edited or co-edited each of the aforementioned 33 monographs. Dziubinski has also published many books, monograph chapters and journal articles, including *Physical Culture in Catholic Seminaries in Poland* (in Polish, *Kultura fizyczna w wyzszych seminariach duchownych Kosciola katolickiego w Polsce*) [2004], *Sport and Tourism in the Roman Catholic Church* (in Polish, *Sport i turystyka w Kosciole rzymskokatolickim*) [2015], and *Sport from the Perspective of St. John Paul II and St. John Bosco* (in Polish, *Sport w perspektywie sw. Jana Pawla II i sw. Jana Bosko*) [2017].

## Research methods

In this article, the relationship between religion and sport is discussed based on a humanist and social analysis of competitive and recreational physical activity. The article was inspired by Zbigniew Dziubinski's latest book, *Sport in the Service of the Person and Community from the Perspective of Pope Francis* (in Polish, *Sport w sluzbie osoby i wspolnoty w perspektywie papieza Franciszka*) [2020b]. In terms of the methodology, a review of the subject literature and an analysis of the secondary data and other source materials are used.

Dziubinski [2020b: 10] explains that he was inspired to analyse sport from the perspective of Pope Francis by the Vatican's publication of the letter entitled *Giving the best of yourself: A Document on the Christian perspective on sport and the human person* [2018]. This letter was prepared by an international team of experts, including the representatives of science, culture and sport, and was published by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, led by Cardinal Kevin Farrell. The letter had been written over a period of many years. Work on the letter was initiated by John Paul II during his papacy. However, given that the authors of the letter are experts from the aforementioned dicastery, should it be treated as part of Pope Francis' teachings? Dziubinski [2020b: 13] underlines that Francis, in his written announcement surrounding the publication of the letter, assumed a heteronomous stance towards the document. Consequently, the Pope sanctioned the contents of the official Vatican letter in a natural manner, which, in fact, should by default be identified with the Pope's stance as Head of the Catholic Church. In his book, Dziubinski considers the letter as the foundation of Francis' teachings on sport and complements it with content taken from the Pope's encyclicals, adhortations, correspondence, homilies and statements.

Dziubinski [2020b: 16] admitted that because he decided to present Francis' declarations as accurately as he could, some repetitions appeared. Dziubinski undoubtedly made this decision to maintain the fluency of his publication (many footnotes referencing the previous parts of the book would make the book difficult

to follow) and due to his conviction that the repetitions emphasise the key points of Pope Francis' teachings. Dziubinski's decision can also be explained by the diverse group of addressees mentioned in the book (students, teachers, lecturers, instructors, coaches and sports animators; as well as lay persons, priests and consecrated persons alike). *Sport in the Service...* is written in a clear style, and does not suffer from excessive superficiality.

## Results and discussion

*Sport in the Service...* presents an interesting selection of facts related to the life of Jorge Bergoglio, including information about his pontificate. For instance, after he became Pope, Francis decided against continuing his predecessors' tradition of greeting the faithful in different languages. He greeted them in Italian only, even though he knows many languages (English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Italian, Latin and Classical Greek) [Dziubinski 2020b: 19, 25]. Francis' decision harmonised fairly well with his image of modesty. Dziubinski [2020b: 26] does not avoid difficult topics related to the views and actions of Francis, such as the Pope's brief interest in liberation theology (a theological movement that was especially popular among the members of the Society of Jesus and in Latin America during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Although the Pope's connections with the Argentinian junta is not mentioned in the book, it remains a contentious issue that has not yet been resolved. Naturally, Dziubinski includes various threads related to sport in Francis' life, such as his unwavering support for the *Atletico San Lorenzo de Almagro Buenos Aires* club, which was founded in 1908 by the Salesian Lorenzo Massa [Dziubinski 2020b: 27].

Francis believes that the Church must acknowledge the dynamic and widespread phenomenon of sport, and should take part in its functioning (which in fact, the Church does). The Church wishes to participate in sports culture, comment on it and for its own benefit and share the responsibility for that culture. The teachings of Francis build upon the ecclesiastical discourse on sport. Previously, John Paul II drew attention to the evangelising potential that could result from cooperation between the Church and sport. He believed that applying Christian values to sport would ensure the fulfilment of the universal values that pertain to both the natural world and the supernatural world. The Second Vatican Council played a key role in establishing the relationship between these two completely different realms, even though sport was rarely discussed explicitly during the related sessions. However, the changes that followed the Council had a monumental effect on Catholic social teachings [Dziubinski 2020b: 32–34]. The Council expressed a vital need to make the presence of the Church felt in the social debate and to counter the

Church's forced transition into the private sphere. The Post-Council Church aimed to be a public and modern institution [Casanova 1994].

According to the Italian Episcopate, the significance of sport is not limited to its popularity. Rather, sport creates and shapes a direction for sociocultural development and reveals the potential outbreaks of social threats. Sport can be an effective diagnostic tool for such trends as body worship, hedonism, beauty-oriented (somatic) asceticism, free market apotheosis, accumulation of wealth, consumerism, unfettered technical development, individualism or striving for success at all costs [Dziubinski 2020b: 51–52]. These trends overlap fairly significantly with the structures of contemporary lifestyles and the popularity of the classical models of physical culture that are distinguished by Zbigniew Krawczyk [2019].

The dialogue between the Church and sport was evident even in the early metaphors of Paul of Tarsus and the works of Thomas Aquinas, who emphasised the advantages of physical fitness competition, as practiced by the Mediaeval Christians on festive occasions [Dziubinski 2020b: 53]. Pope Francis disagrees with the widespread opinion that the Christianity of the Middle Ages and the early modern era depreciated the human body and inhibited the development of sport. Instead, he believes that the historical analyses are unreliable (biased). Dziubinski [2020b: 42] disputes this view, providing the results of his own research as evidence [Dziubinski 2015]. However, Dziubinski focuses on modern times, and underlines that at the onset of globalisation during the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (when the disciplines established in the UK spread to Europe, as well as to the former British dominions, colonies and other dependent territories [Maguire 1994]), the Catholic Church supported sports events. Firstly, Pierre de Coubertin, immediately before the modern Olympic Games were reinstated, was inspired by Catholic priests, including the Dominican Henri Didon, and the latter even gave a speech at a meeting of the International Olympic Committee in 1897. Secondly, Pope Pius X gave both moral (Coubertin visited the Vatican in 1905) and material support to the cause of reinstating the Olympic Games by funding a prize for the sportspersons participating in London in 1908. During the event, Bishop Ethelbert Talbot said, during a mass held at St. Paul's Cathedral, 'The important thing in the Olympic Games is not so much the winning but taking part, for the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well'. Coubertin repeated this sentence during a reception, which is why it is often mistakenly attributed to him. The sentence has been paraphrased numerous times. Significantly, it has become a motto that expresses the philosophy behind the Olympic movement, including such notions as fair play or the aim to be 'faster, higher, stronger'. Unfortunately, current Olympic practice tends to implement only the latter of these notions [Dziubinski 2020b: 37–39; Casanova 1994].



Dziubinski [2020b: 57–58] advises against using the term *Christian sport* as an alternative to conventional sport. He suggests using the term a *Christian vision of sport* instead, which denotes an orientation towards success, but also – and primarily – an aim for holistic personal development and harmonious cooperation within a community based on the New Testament vision of good. John Paul II commented on sport many times, but usually did not address the issue of everyday sports practice (which involves phenomena that are both socially beneficial and socially harmful), but rather focused on the ‘archetype’ of sport as a form and point of reference. Sport has great potential, which humankind can and should take advantage of, even if sometimes – due to our human imperfections – we fail to do so. In this sense, sport is axiologically neutral [Dziubinski 2020b: 69], or can even be said to be amoral [Kosiewicz 2014].

Pope Francis rejects the idea that sport and other branches of culture (sculpture, painting, music, theatre and poetry) are inseparable; however, Dziubinski disagrees [2020b: 76–77] and indicates: 1) the Panhellenic culture of Olympia with its scholars and artists, who, by developing their talents added an intellectual aspect to the cult of the body and physical fitness; and 2) sport as a source of artistic inspiration [Mosz 2015]. Modern sport has also permeated literature, painting, music, and later, photography and cinema [Liponski 1974].

### *Defining sport*

According to Francis, professional sport constitutes physical competition that is admired by the masses and takes place in the form of a show, with the competitors and the fans playing the main role. The Pope underlines the fact that sport is an integral and complementary element of society and culture. It is an abstract, yet tangible, idea. Each of the many definitions of sport arise from a specific cognitive perspective. Sport has also undergone changes throughout history. However, the lack of a universal definition of sport does not preclude attempts at a contextual description. Francis mentions some of its intrinsic features: 1) sport is a physical activity focused on exercising the body and achieving physical perfection; 2) sport is a ludic activity (entertainment); 3) sport involves particular rules, and following those rules is its principle; 4) sport involves competitiveness; and 5) equal opportunities are another principle of sport (with reference to Point 3 [Pawlucki 2016b]). In summary, sport constitutes ‘a specific type of physical activity on the part of individuals and groups, who by following the rules of the game and providing equal chances, participate in ludic events, in which they compete against one another or their performance is compared to the performance of others’ [Dziubinski 2020b: 67–68, 80–86].

Przemyslaw Nosal [2015] distinguishes three approaches to sport, including two extremes: an attributive approach, a contextual approach, and structured

contextualism, which is the most balanced of the three. The attributive approach revolves around a set of fundamental characteristics of sport, which create a mosaic that determines the nature of sport. The contextual approach assumes that sport is socially defined, and that each different society is empowered to express its nature. Therefore, sport is exactly what the discourse of a particular society defines it to be. Structural contextualism also views sport as a set of social practices that society defines; however, these practices also have an established universal structure, which is defined by the society as the fundamental common traits that are required to call something *sport*. These practices include: 1) separation from a broader social context; 2) conventionality (being subject to rules and control); 3) competitiveness; 4) activities performed by people and for other people; and 5) the physicality of these activities. Pope Francis defines sport based on its characteristic features, meaning that his approach is attributive. However, Dziubinski [2020b: 86] notes that the Pope’s definition is incomplete, because it does not account for the many other, more or less important attributes of physical activity, even though his definition seems adequate from the viewpoint of the Church.

Some attitudes also take into account the peripheral areas of sport as its attributes, i.e. aspects that are not directly tied to a sports game but still affect that game [e.g. Jarvie 2006]. The advantage of the enumerative (attributive) perspective is the ability to demonstrate the internal diversity of sport. The emphasis on the multidimensionality of sport helps to incorporate the many factors that affect its sociocultural significance. This approach is used by researchers such as Jay Coakley [2007], Bower Bell [1987], Mike McNamee [2008] and Florian Znaniński [1973]. The disadvantage of this approach is that it fails to keep up with the rapidly-changing social reality. Furthermore, the attributes listed rarely constitute the necessary or sufficient conditions to call a given phenomenon *sport* [Nosal 2015]. As was already mentioned, Dziubinski points this out, and goes on to complement the Pope’s approach with Maciej Demel’s and Alcija Sklad’s classical definition of sport [1970], which also corresponds to an attributive approach.

Contextualism and structured contextualism overlap with both: 1) the constructivist understanding of society, according to which people perceive their environment from the perspective of their own cultural circle and experiences, which precludes the existence of an objective reality (cultural relativism); and 2) postmodernist thought, in which constructivism is popularised and it is stated that there are no universal values, objective truth or common human nature. Consequently, postmodernism is incompatible with the dogma-based teachings of the Catholic Church (which is evident in the opinions voiced by John Paul II [Dziubinski 2020b: 155]) and with other religious interpretations of reality

[Rymarczyk 2019].

#### *Attitude towards the human body*

According to Francis, the Church's attitude towards the human body may seem to be a negative one considering the history of the research on sport. According to Francis, Catholic theology and spirituality have a positive outlook on the material world, which was created by God and, as such, is good. This thesis is supported by the fact that Early Christian and Mediaeval theologians frequently criticised the Gnostics and Manichaeans, who rejected the Jewish and some Christian scriptures, including the Book of Genesis, and considered the material reality (in this case, the human body) to be evil and abominable. Dziubinski [2020b: 97–100] admits that Francis' attitude is partially justified, although the Christian thought on the relationship between the body and the soul has not been completely uniform throughout history. A good example is found in one of the most recognisable Early Christian thinkers, Augustine of Hippo, who initially denigrated the entirety of the material world. However, in his later works he indicated a reversal of opinion, as was confirmed by his active lifestyle that was filled with exhausting travel and appreciation for physical effort and work, which he recommended to the contemporary clergy [Kowalczyk 2007].

Self-denial is an aspect of asceticism that is characteristic not only of Christianity, but also of other religious and spiritual traditions. Dziubinski [2020b: 109–110] underlines that the point of self-denial is not the abandonment of health, but rather a harmonious development in which the spirit predominates the body, just as superego predominates over id, to use a psychoanalytic metaphor [Freud 1922]. Andrzej Pawlucky [2016a] observes that a complete rejection of material (bodily) life in favour of a spiritual one negates the point of asceticism, which is then transformed into 'anti-asceticism' and brings on the self-destruction of the human body. Such attitudes constitute a threat to both personal and social development. Consequently, modern interpretations of the Bible fundamentally coincide with the current paradigm of sports science, in that they justify having respect for the human body and health (the application of the 'new health paradigm' [Rekowski 2019, Giddens 2009]) and by demanding such an attitude from every human being.

Approaching the body from the perspective of harmonious personal development (somatic, psychological and spiritual alike) is nothing new, but is an attitude that regained popularity only as recently as in the Renaissance. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this attitude could be found in Coubertin's pedagogy of sport, and later, in Jędrzej Sniadecki's [1956] classical theory of physical education. The contemporary Church also promotes harmonious and balanced personal development, as is confirmed by the documents published following the Second Vatican Council and the papal teachings (among

others, by John Paul II and Benedict XVI). In a study on physical culture conducted among the Radiance and Life youth association in Warsaw, almost all the respondents (92%) declared that they aimed to achieve versatile development that encompassed the physical, intellectual and spiritual spheres alike [Jasny 2018]. The percentage of respondents that accepted the ideal of a comprehensively developed human being was higher than in a more general study on physical culture conducted among youth in Warsaw, in which 76% of the respondents agreed [Jankowski 2010]. Pope Francis continues to support the holistic development of a person through sport. He also observes that various environments, by distancing themselves from religion, limit or prevent the spiritual development of sportspersons, which is harmful and impoverishing [Dziubinski 2020b: 136–139].

#### *The 'dark side' of sport*

Jakub Stempień's concept of methodological dysfunctionism [2020] is an analytical proposal created to evaluate the sports character of a given activity, in order to confirm or reject its status as a sport. According to methodological dysfunctionism, the sports-related functionality of an activity can be assessed based on the phenomena that contravene the idea of sport, rather than on the characteristics of sport. Stempień lists the following as the most common 'dark sides' of sport: 1) doping; 2) corruption; 3) politicisation and ideologisation; 4) commercialisation; 5) mediatisation; 6) gigantomaniac sports events; and 7) fan aggression and hooliganism. Stempień considers the first five of these faults to be dysfunctions [Merton 1968] and himself underlines that he did not use the term *social pathology*, because in addition to denoting the breaking of values and standards, the term also encompasses the social consequences of an action. Thus, *pathology* refers to doping and corruption, but not to mediatisation, commercialisation or politicisation, which are accepted or least tolerated and, in fact, are all but unavoidable. Whereas using the term *pathology* would not limit the scope of an analysis, it would exclude various harmful phenomena that negate the ideals and values of sport. Stempień's concept can be used as an interpretative framework to help identify the dark side of sport (including its pathologies and dysfunctions) within the teachings of the Church, especially with regard to the teachings of Pope Francis.

The Pope also addresses doping from the viewpoint of axiology and morality, stating that doping poses an individual, collective and systemic threat alike. Russia is an infamous recent example of a systemic threat [Altukhov, Nauright 2018]. Francis also draws attention to the social determinants of doping; i.e. the abuse of sportspersons by collective and institutional parties [Waddington 2008]. He distinguishes between pharmacological doping and techno-doping (gaining an advantage by means of illegal improvements to sporting equipment) [Schu-

macher 1999)) and he also warns against degrading the value of a sportsperson's body exclusively to its substantial aspects [Dziubinski 2020b: 44, 173–177]. Meanwhile, Stempien [2020] notes that doping seems to be the only dysfunction that is typical for sport.

According to the Pope, although civilisational development has undoubtedly brought countless benefits to humankind, apotheosising technological progress is inadvisable. Dziubinski [2020b: 208] points out the dynamic development of e-sports (electronic sport, or organised competitive video gaming [Thiel, John 2019]), which symbolises the postmodern changes that comprise the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sports scene. The gradual mediatisation of social reality, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, involves a growing risk of the degradation of social environments and the impoverishment of communal life, especially among young people. In this case, conventional sport could serve as a counterweight, an opportunity for a direct meeting, and a tool for intentional, integrative collaboration.

As with mediatisation, commercialisation may cause the groups that are characteristic of the social aspect of sport to disintegrate. The free market usually weakens the integrity of fan communities by dividing tight-knit groups into individual consumers that are united only occasionally, during a sports event. Commercialisation also promotes corruption (e.g. the underhanded acquisition of the right to organise and broadcast sports events). According to Francis, sport suffers from corruption on all levels, from the local, through the national to the global stage. The beneficiaries and victims of this corruption are the sportspersons, judges, fans, event managers and the event organisers. Dziubinski [2020b: 178–180] provides the scandals in Italian and Polish football as examples of this corruption. Wojciech Wozniak [2019] observes that the Polish scandal is a special case, in that there is no connection between match fixing and bookmaking (an instance of commercialisation specific for sport); nonetheless, bookmaking generates corruption, and an interest on the part of criminal groups in bookmaking only exacerbates its dysfunctional potential [Stempien 2020]. The Pope also addresses the worrying issues surrounding the practice of bookmaking.

Francis believes that politicisation is another threat to the autonomy, values and ideals of sport, because it engages sportspersons in non-sport-related actions. Dziubinski [2020b, p. 163, 205], in addition to the aforementioned systemic doping in Russia and the controversial Chinese policy related to sport, also indicates the political, nationalistic and propagandistic instrumentalisation of sport in the Third Reich. For Adolf Hitler, the primary goal of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin was to show the world the power of the German nation (the supremacy of the master race). Disregarding the Olympic tradition, the Führer invited the winners to visit his stadium *loge* in order to congratulate them

in person. However, he left the stadium early when two black Americans, Cornelius Johnson and David Albritton, won the first two places in the high jump.

Before the 2014 FIFA World Cup, the Brazil Episcopate published an informative booklet and a note, in which they expressed their happiness about being the upcoming host of the event; nonetheless, in the same booklet, they listed many concerns related to: 1) investing in the sports infrastructure at the cost of more meaningful investments, such as hospitals or schools; 2) brutal suppression of protests caused by social dissatisfaction with the decisions surrounding the organisation of the events; 3) ruthless eviction of citizens from places that have been designated as venues for events; 4) contributing to the degradation of the natural environment; 5) sanctioning of illegal governmental actions; 6) lack of organisational transparency; 7) lack of public consultations; and 8) abuse of the workers hired to construct sports facilities [Dziubinski 2020b: 166–168]. These concerns overlapped to a fairly significant extent with the dominant criticisms of large-scale sports events provided by sociologists, who conclude that such events often deepen social inequalities and make it easier to overlook the rights of the poorest people [e.g. Lenskyj 2000; Wloch 2017; Zimbalist 2015].

Archbishop Anuar Battisti, who is responsible for matters related to tourism, underlined that the success of a large-scale sports event should not be measured by the amount of money the fans spend in the host country, but by how well human rights are protected, which are endangered whenever such an event is held. Dziubinski [2020b: 168–171] notes that John Paul II made an appeal to all persons engaged in the sport and tourism industry not to forget about respecting nature and sustainable development while earning money from their occupation. Francis points out that sport and recreation do not themselves constitute a threat to the environment. The problem arises owing to aforementioned investments related to sport and the many different interested parties; likewise, organising events responsibly, by taking into account the suggestions of ecologists and fostering collaboration, presents a challenge. Dziubinski adds that the treatment of the animals that take part in sports events is an issue that is very rarely addressed [Nosal 2017]. Pope Francis is the author of *Laudato si'*, the first encyclical in history devoted to the protection of the natural environment (the 'Green Encyclical'), which is inspired by the life of Francis of Assisi.

Poorly-organised and highly instrumentalised sport may lead to hostility and, consequently, an outbreak of violence [e.g. Armstrong, Harris 1991; Taylor 1971]. To this day, the match between the Croatian club Dinamo Zagreb and the Serbian club Crvena Zvezda during the 1990 Yugoslavian league is considered a symbolic beginning of the war for Croatian independence [Sahaj 2012]. According to Francis, every act of aggression is con-



demnable, which is something everyone responsible for sport should bear in mind. However, despite many initiatives, such as workshops for the fans conducted by specially trained volunteers to prevent hostilities, acts of aggression, violence, hooliganism, racism and xenophobia are still inseparable parts of the sports scene [Dziubinski 2020b: 147, 169]. Dziubinski's monograph also references each of Stempien's [2020] dark sides of sport, where the pathologies and dysfunctions are confronted with the universal categories, such as equality, solidarity, respect and fair play, that solidify the Christian outlook on sport.

## Conclusions

The first Christians distanced themselves from the idea of Ancient Olympism due to its ties with Greek polytheism [Urbankowski 1993]. Conversely, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was sport (Western sport, primarily British) that began distancing itself from its religious roots [Kelly 2012]. Physical competitions remained as a form of local play. However, civilisational processes (institutionalisation, professionalisation and globalisation) have imbued sport with a global dimension and a relative autonomy. Pope Francis is sceptical about Coubertin's notion of *religio athletae*, mentioned at the beginning of this article, because the modern Olympic Games are not a religion, and never will be, and any attempts at ascribing a religious function to these competitions are pointless. The Italian episcopate shares Francis' opinion [Dziubinski 2020b: 56, 71, 74, 111].

John Paul II believed that there was no contradiction between spiritual values and sports values, which create a harmonious whole. Therefore, sportspersons should not have to choose between their professional aspirations and building their spiritual life. However, Francis is convinced that a dialogue between the Catholic Church and science (including the sports science) is a beneficial approach. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century marked the beginning of a fruitful period of cooperation between the Catholic Church and sport in history, which is evident from numerous initiatives (in Poland, these included the Catholic Youth Association and the Salesian Sports Organisation) [Mazurkiewicz 2018]. Pope Francis is well aware that sport is a very diverse and multidimensional construct. Even so, his view on sport is unilaterally positive. He also teaches that its potential should be used properly, i.e. for the benefit of the individual and society. The Catholic Church not only aim to observe sport, but, following the decisions of the Second Vatican Council, wishes to share the responsibility for sport. In order to fulfil this task, the Church intends to spread a Christian vision of sport, which is founded on philosophical and theological grounds and the Church's long-standing traditions and experience. Furthermore, Francis indicates

that future priests should always be taught the knowledge and practices related to sport, which is an approach that is already bearing fruit in many seminaries throughout the world [Dziubinski 2020b: 183–184, 188, 200–201]. He also emphasises the importance of providing spiritual guidance to sportspersons and maintaining the presence of sport in individual parishes. In the Pope's own words: 'It's beautiful when a parish has a sports club; something is missing without one' [quoted after Dziubinski 2020b: 194].

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## Sport w nauczaniu papieża Franciszka: problemy, perspektywy badawcze, dyskursy

**Słowa kluczowe:** sport, papież Franciszek, Kościół rzymskokatolicki

### Abstrakt

Tło. Związki religii ze sportem widać w codziennym życiu konkretnych zawodników i kibiców, ale także w sferze symboli oraz rytuałów. W Polsce, w odróżnieniu od debaty na poziomie międzynarodowym, dominuje ujęcie chrześcijańskie wynikające z uwarunkowań socjalizacyjno-kulturowych.

Problem i cel. Praca wpisuje się w nieoczywisty dyskurs nauk o kulturze fizycznej na temat związków religii ze sportem, koncentrując się na badanym od niedawna nauczaniu papieża Franciszka.

Metody. Artykuł oparto na przeglądzie literatury przedmiotu, analizie danych zastanych i innych materiałów źródłowych, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem książki Zbigniewa Dziubińskiego, zatytułowanej *Sport w służbie osoby i wspólnoty w perspektywie papieża Franciszka*.

Wyniki. Franciszek definiuje sport w oparciu o zbiór jego cech charakterystycznych. Stanowisko papieża reprezentuje podejście atrybucyjne. Cieleśna powściągliwość stanowi część ascezy, charakterystycznej dla chrześcijaństwa, ale także innych tradycji religijno-duchowych. Jej celem nie jest jednak pozbawianie się sił witalnych, tylko harmonijny rozwój człowieka, w którym jednak to duch panuje nad ciałem. Nowoczesne interpretacje przesłania biblijnego zasadniczo zbiegają się z obowiązującym paradygmatem nauk o kulturze fizycznej, uzasadniając słuszność szacunku dla ludzkiego ciała oraz zdrowia. W nauczaniu Franciszka można znaleźć odniesienia do każdej z wyróżnionych w ramach koncepcji dysfunkcjonalizmu metodologicznego „ciemnych stron” sportu. Patologie i dysfunkcje skonfrontowano z petryfikującymi chrześcijańską wizję sportu uniwersalnymi kategoriami, takimi jak równość, solidarność, szacunek czy uczciwość.

Konkluzje. Wartości duchowe i sportowe tworzą harmonijny zestaw. Najbardziej owocny okres współpracy Kościół-sport trwa od początku XX wieku. Franciszek zdaje sobie sprawę z tego, jak wielowymiarowym i zróżnicowanym konstruktem jest sport. Mimo to ocenia go jednoznacznie pozytywnie, wyrażając jednocześnie troskę o to, aby jego potencjał był wykorzystywany właściwie, dla dobra jednostki i społeczeństwa.