

Fr. Adam Wojtczak OMI*
WT UAM, Poznań

SEARCH FOR THE SPECIFICITY OF POPE FRANCIS'S MARIOLOGY

Francis is a Marian Pope. His six-year-long pontificate so far has resulted in a large number of speeches dedicated to Mary (about 130). The repetitiveness of certain themes and expressions allows us to speak about the specificity of his Mariology and to bring out new and original themes. The article does this in two points. The first concerns the methodology of the Francis' Mariology. It is a "Mariology in context," salvific-historical, respecting the principle of *nexus mysteriorum*. Its *loci theologici* are the Bible, interpreted in its entirety; conciliar Mariology; *theologia mentis* and *theologia cordis*, which is born out of religious experience. It has an eminently pastoral colour. The second point, out of a broad thematic range, distinguishes the statements concerning Mary which are close to Francis: The Mother of God – a synthesis of grace and faith; Mary – the personal concretization of the Church; *Hodegetria* – the first and perfect disciple of Christ; the Handmaid of man; the Icon and Mother of Mercy; the Star of the New Evangelization; the Queen of tenderness.

March 2019 marks the end of the first six years of Pope Francis' pontificate. In the context of his multidimensional doctrinal importance, the question arises about his teaching on Mary, both in terms of content and form. More specifically, is it possible to distinguish any characteristic features of his Marian doctrine? Are these only loose Marian themes, or are there grounds to speak about the coherence

* Fr. Adam Wojtczak OMI – associate professor of the Department of Fundamental, Dogmatic and Ecumenical Theology at the Faculty of Theology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań; member of the Polish Mariological Society and Pontifical International Academy of Mary; author of several books and about 80 academic articles on Mariology, theology of consecrated life and the Eucharist in Polish and foreign journals; e-mail: adamwojt@amu.edu.pl; ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6431-2116>.

of Francis' Mariology? How does it converge with and differ from the Marian doctrine of the post-conciliar popes?

Pope Bergoglio, like his post-conciliar predecessors in the Holy See, is a Marian Pope. "I don't know why," he confesses, "but Mary, Mother, has always attracted me."¹ His pontificate is characterized by a considerable number of statements dedicated to Mary (about 120). They have a characteristic order, according to which the Marian theme accompanies his specific statements every year. Moreover, he concludes most of his speeches and documents of great importance (encyclicals *Lumen fidei* and *Laudato si'*, apostolic exhortations *Evangelii gaudium* and *Gaudete et exsultate*) with references and invocations to Mary. The repetitiveness of certain motifs and formulations allows us to speak about the specificity of his Mariology.

However, it has not yet been comprehensively and thoroughly elaborated. A few publications only introduce the richness of Francis's Marian teaching. They are limited to outlining his theological image of Mary.² This gap is filled, albeit in part, by some of my studies, published in collective publications or theological journals, which are the fruit of several years of research on the Francis' doctrine on Mary.³ It seems that on the basis of these studies we can read out its key perspectives. The limited scope of the article and the still ongoing pontificate do not allow us to draw a complete set of conclusions. For the sake of clarity, I divide them into conclusions of a methodological and content-related nature.

¹ Francis/M. Pozza, *Ave Maria*, Niepokalanów 2018, p. 82.

² Eg. A. Awi Mello, *Mit Maria leben. Ein Gespräch mit Papst Franziskus*, Leipzig [2016]; T. Turi, *Papa Francesco tra laicologia e mariologia. Un'importante relazione teologica ed ecclesiologicala*, Monopoli 2016; C.M. Galli, *Cristo, Maria, la Chiesa e i popoli. La mariologia di papa Francesco*, Città del Vaticano 2017; P. Warchoń, *Maryja w nauczaniu papieża Franciszka*, „Salvatoris Mater” 19 (2017), No. 1–4, p. 216–237.

³ A. Wojtczak, *Maryja – „Gwiazda nowej ewangelizacji” w ujęciu adhortacji apostolskiej „Evangelii gaudium”*, in: *Teologia dogmatyczna*, vol. 9, ed. P. Kiejkowski, Poznań 2014, p. 33–57; idem, *Maryjne oblicze „Kościoła ubogiego dla ubogich”*, in: *Teologia dogmatyczna*, vol. 10, ed. P. Kiejkowski, Poznań 2015, p. 57–82; idem, *O maryjny kształt Nadzwyczajnego Jubileuszu Miłosierdzia*, „Studia Gnesnensia” 29 (2015), p. 229–248; idem, *Maryja – „doskonała ikona wiary”. Wokół autorstwa maryjnego wątku encykliki „Lumen fidei”*, „Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne” 30 (2016), p. 385–412; idem, *Z Maryją ku ekologii integralnej*, in: *Teologia dogmatyczna*, vol. 11, ed. P. Kiejkowski, Poznań 2016, p. 81–104; idem, *Niepokalana – ikona prymatu łaski w ujęciu papieża Franciszka*, „Teologia w Polsce” 11 (2017), No. 1, p. 107–127; idem, *Maryja – „Niewiasta pamiętająca” według papieża Franciszka*, „Studia Gnesnensia” 31 (2017), p. 105–121; idem, *Maryjne odcienie chrześcijańskiej serdeczności według papieża Franciszka*, „Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana” 2018, No. 1, p. 245–265.

THE METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF FRANCIS' MARIOLOGY

In the Pope's teaching, Marian content is not external in nature, but forms its internal structure. The Pope systematizes Mariology through Christology and ecclesiology, since it is linked to the fundamental structure created by Christ and the Church, and is the most concrete expression of this relationship. It is marked by the *nexus mysteriorum*: a close bond between the mysteries of the Christian faith.⁴ Beyond "Mariology in context," Francis proposes that the mystery of Mary be studied not only on the path of truth (*via veritatis*) but also on the path of beauty (*via pulchritudinis*), for before the angel "called her Mary, he calls her full of grace and thus reveals the new name which God gave her and which fits her more than the name given to her by her parents,"⁵ and also on the path of love (*via caritatis*), since its salvific mission is realized in the ministry of loving tenderness.⁶

The value of Franciscan Mariology lies in the diversity of *loci theologici*. Among them, the Bible has a privileged place. Numerous references to the Bible enrich his Marian teaching. The unity of the two Testaments is dear to his heart. He points out that in Mary they are one thing. She is fully a daughter of Israel, the end of the Messianic Church of Israel and the beginning of the nascent Church of Christ.⁷ In this regard, the Pope exposes the prophetic antithesis of Eve-Mary⁸ and the Marian typology of the "humble and poor daughter of Zion."⁹ In explaining the biblical texts, he refers to the teachings of the Fathers of the Church (Irenaeus of Lyon, Ambrose, Augustine, Athanasius of Alexandria) and of medieval writers (Isaac of Stella, Bernard of Clairvaux). Occasionally, they makes use of the liturgy and the pre-conciliar teachings of the Church's Magisterium. One exception is the

⁴ „Because of this it is impossible to separate contemplating Jesus, the Word of life who has become visible and tangible (cf. 1 Jn 1:1), from contemplating Mary, who has given Him her love and his human flesh” (Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 1 Jan 2015). „[...] the relationship which unites Mary and the Church is so deep” (idem, *General audience*, 3 Sep 2014).

⁵ Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 8 Dec 2017.

⁶ Cf. Francis, *Homily in the shrine of Our Lady of Mercy in El Cobre*, 22 Sep 2015; M. Borghesi, *Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Biografía intelectualna. Dialektyka i mistyka*, Kraków 2018, p. 415–416. „Beauty is one of the human dimensions that we too often overlook. We talk about truth, we talk about goodness, and we ignore beauty” (Francis/M. Pozza, op. cit., p. 69).

⁷ Cf. Francis, *General audience*, 23 Oct 2013.

⁸ Cf. Francis, *Catechesis during a prayer meeting on St. Peter's square*, 12 Oct 2013; idem, *Angelus Domini*, 8 Dec 2016; Francis/M. Pozza, op. cit., p. 93.

⁹ Cf. Francis, *Homily on the occasion of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 12 Dec 2015; idem, *Angelus Domini*, 20 Dec 2015.

dogmatic judgment of the Ephesus Council about the divine motherhood of Mary, to which he returns several times.¹⁰

The Mariology of Francis is also deeply rooted in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.¹¹ It is characterized by a vision of the mystery of Mary in a historical-salvific perspective. She is at the center of the economy of salvation, not obscuring Christ, but presenting Him as the meaning and center of history. She is the privileged “place” of God’s activity,¹² the “perfect work of the Holy Trinity,”¹³ in whom grace encountered a humble and obedient response of faith (*fiat*).¹⁴ Thanks to this, Mary cooperates in the salvific work of Christ, Her privileges are a continually shared good in the life of the Church.

In addition to the Marian chapter of the Council’s Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, which the document of the Church he cites most often, Francis refers to the Marian teaching of his post-conciliar predecessors in the Holy See. He starts with the assumption that the Council’s teaching did not exhaust the whole spectrum of the mystery of Mary, but is a hermeneutical horizon, a base for any further reflection, both theological and pastoral. For this reason, it uses mainly the encyclical of John Paul II *Redemptoris Mater*,¹⁵ and to a smaller extent the Marian thought of Paul VI (Exhortation *Mariialis cultus*) and Benedict XVI (Encyclical *Deus caritas est*, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*). Marian themes are usually taken over from them indirectly, i.e. without indicating their author or a concrete document (e.g. the faith of Mary, the nature of her presence and manifestations of the ministry of love in the Church, the reference to the Word of God, the beauty of the Immaculate, the entrusting oneself to Mary, the Mother of mercy, the Mother of

¹⁰ Some examples: Francis, *Homily for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*, 1 Jan 2014); idem, *Homily for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*, 1 Jan 2015; idem, *Homily for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*, 1 Jan 2017.

¹¹ “At the end of its Constitution on the Church, the Second Vatican Council left us a very beautiful meditation on Mary Most Holy [...]. In the light of this most beautiful image of our Mother, we are able to see the message of the biblical readings that we have just heard” (Francis, *Homily during the Holy Mass on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 15 Aug 2013).

¹² Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 15 Aug 2018.

¹³ Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 15 June 2014.

¹⁴ “The attitude of Mary of Nazareth shows us that *being* comes before *doing*, and *to leave the doing* to God in order *to be* truly as he wants us. It is He who works so many marvels in us. Mary is receptive, but not passive [...] on the spiritual level, she accepts the grace and corresponds to it with faith” (Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 8 Dec 2014). Cf. idem, *Angelus Domini*, 15 Aug 2015.

¹⁵ “Saint John Paul II, in *Redemptoris Mater*, which I would recommend you read, absorb and read again, had a circular way of thinking; he was a teacher, but he was a man of God. For this reason the text has to be read again and again in order to gain the full benefit of its richness” (Francis, *Meeting with clergy, religious and seminarians in the National Marian Shrine El Quinche, Quito, Ecuador*, 8 July 2015).

our hope, the remembering Woman, the Teacher of piety). Sometimes he develops them theologically and usually draws existential conclusions from them, because his papal ministry is more spiritual than theological.¹⁶

The key to Francis's Mariology should also be sought in the spirituality of the Ignatian tradition¹⁷ and Latin American experience, characterized by vivid folk religiousness.¹⁸ He himself recounts that the folk religiousness taken from childhood had an important role in shaping his Mariology.¹⁹ Later, during his studies in Augsburg he admired so much the picture venerated under the name of "Mary untying the knots" (*Maria Knotenlöserin*), that he brought its copy to Argentina. When, as a bishop and later cardinal, he arrived in Rome, he visited the basilica of *Santa Maria Maggiore* to pray before the icon of Mary the *Salus Populi Romani*, venerated there. The day after he had been elected Pope he went there again, to put flowers at her feet and entrust to her his Petrine ministry,²⁰ and a day later he said to the cardinals: "I entrust my ministry and your ministry to the powerful intercession of Mary, our Mother, Mother of the Church."²¹ He also asked his brothers in the Jesuit order to pray to Mary: "I ask all the Jesuits to pray for me and to commend me to the loving protection of the Virgin Mary, our Mother in heaven."²² On 13 October 2013 he entrusted his entire pontificate and the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He confesses that he prays the Rosary every day.²³ He also gladly visits Marian shrines (Aparecida, Guadalupe, Częstochowa, Fatima, Knock) and refers to Marian apparitions which encourage to "cling to Christ and to give evangelical witness."²⁴ However, the pope explains that the Church does not treat such revelations as the source of faith. Faith is rooted in the Gospel.²⁵ Mary comes "to remind us that God's light dwells within us and protects

¹⁶ This will be developed further in the second chapter of the article. Cf. L. Scaraffia, *Jak nasze matki i nasze babcie. Papież Franciszek o Matce Bożej na początku miesiąca maryjnego*, *OsRomPol* 34 (2013), No 6, p. 3.

¹⁷ "His thought and spirit feed on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, the mystical current of the Society of Jesus, which combines contemplation and activity" (M. Borghesi, *Jorge Mario Bergoglio*, p. 34).

¹⁸ "[...] Marian spirituality is seen as a reality belonging to and defining the identity of the Latin American continent." (D. Gardocki, *Obraz Maryi w dokumentach Rady Biskupów Ameryki Łacińskiej po Soborze Watykańskim II*, „*Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego*” 38 (2018), No. 1, p. 55–65).

¹⁹ Cf. P. Warchoń, *Maryja...*, p. 216.

²⁰ Cf. Francis, *Homily in the Marian Shrine in Aparecida*, 24 Aug 2013.

²¹ Francis, *Audience for the cardinals*, 15 March 2013.

²² Francis, *The Letter of the Pope to the General of the Jesuits* (16 March 2013).

²³ „Ich bin einer vom täglichen Rosenkranz” (A. Awi Mello, *Mit Maria leben...*, p. 36).

²⁴ Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 14 May 2017.

²⁵ Francis/M. Pozza, op. cit., p. 117–118.

us.”²⁶ She wraps us in the cloak of Light, given to her by God²⁷ and speaks, as to Juan Diego in Guadalupe, “Let your heart not be troubled... Am I not here, who am your Mother?”²⁸

The personal Marian experience makes the Mariology of Francis to be not only the *theologia mentis*, which is characterized by a methodologically academic approach, but also – at least at some points – the *theologia cordis*, which is characterized by emotionality, with features like: being moved, love or zeal.²⁹ On the one hand, they contribute to the fact that his teaching on Mary is authentic because it is imbued with his filial dedication to Mary and his trust in her maternal mediation. On the other hand, the papal thought sometimes shows signs of psychologizing. It results for example in the lack of precision in explaining the nature of mediation of Mary. It is difficult to discern whether he means intercession, as the last Council teaches,³⁰ or also a descending order, in the sense of the distribution of graces. He usually understands it as intercessory.³¹ It happens, however, that he suggests that Mary is the minister/dispenser of graces³² and even the “source of our joy.”³³ He addresses her with a strong request: “Give us the health that you alone can give us.”³⁴ Furthermore, Francis does not consistently interpret the words of Jesus on the cross (“Behold, your mother”). They usually have for him the “value of the last will”³⁵ which establishes Mary’s spiritual motherhood.³⁶ “And from that moment on she becomes our Mother.”³⁷ At other times he sees in these words more as a solemn proclamation, a proclamation, because it is already in existence from the moment of her fiat spoken

²⁶ Francis, *Homily on the 100th Anniversary of the First Apparition in Fatima*, 13 May 2017.

²⁷ See *ibidem*.

²⁸ Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii gaudium on the Proclamation of Gospel in Today’s World* (24 Nov 2013), No. 286 [further on: EG].

²⁹ *The theology of heart (theologia cordis) of Francis is amply expounded by M. Neri, Theologia cordis – Theologie und der Eröffnung der affektiven Grundlagen des Christentums*, in: *Barmherzigkeit und zärtliche Liebe. Das theologische Programm von Papst Franziskus*, ed. K. Appel, J.H. Deibl, Freiburg im Breisgau 2016, p. 85–98.

³⁰ *Lumen Gentium* 61.

³¹ Cf. Francis, *Message for the 24th World Day of the Sick*, 25 Sep 2015; *idem, Speech in the Marian Shrine in Knock*, 26 Aug 2018.

³² Cf. Francis, *The Prayer in the Chapel of the Apparitions*, 12 May 2017.

³³ Francis, *Homily for the Liturgical Commemoration of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 12 Dec 2016. [Translator’s note: in Italian, as well as in the English translation “the source of joy” refers to “protection”, not to Mary herself].

³⁴ Francis, *Rosary Service in the Basilica Santa Maria Maggiore*, 4 May 2013.

³⁵ Francis, *Homily on the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God*, 1 Jan 2014.

³⁶ “Jesus’ words are the source of *Mary’s maternal vocation for all humanity*” (Francis, *Message for the World Day of the Sick 2018*, 26 Nov 2017).

³⁷ Francis, *Homily in the House of St. Martha*, 15 Sep 2016.

at the annunciation. Mary, becoming the Mother of Jesus, became at the same time the Mother of his disciples. In Him, she is the Mother of all of them.³⁸ At Calvary the Son looked at her with love and in John the Apostle entrusted all of them to Her maternal care³⁹ they had experienced before, especially at the wedding in Cana.⁴⁰

For obvious reasons, Francis' Marian teaching has a pastoral shade. Its originality lies in the simplicity of his style of speaking, his directness and ability to reach the hearts of the people. During one of his first homilies in the House of Saint Martha, the Pope teaches that "the faith of the people of God is a simple faith that may not contain much theology, but includes a theology that is without error because it has the Holy Spirit in it."⁴¹ This is why he suggests the motto: "If we want to know who Mary is, we have to ask theologians. But if we want to know how to love her, we have to ask the people."⁴² Of course, Marian dogmas are the centre of his teaching on Mary. However, less than Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, he deals with their doctrinal quality, that is, the circumstances in which they were defined and a deeper explanation of their theological meaning. He does not confine himself to a circle of doctrinal reflections, but seeks to read the signs of the present day and to show how believers can introduce Mary, her faith, love and spirituality into their lives. Ultimately, it is about her maternal assistance on the path of faith, always oriented – even if it concerns temporal matters – towards the achievement of eternal life. Thanks to the Virgin we discover that faith helps us to rise above ourselves in order to take refuge in God's arms.⁴³ He explains the existence and importance of Marian shrines in the current of maternal accessibility and tenderness. The shrines are not a manifestation of excessive human emotionality and sentimentalism, but rather of a Christian experience – to put it more

³⁸ Cf. Francis, *Speech to the members of 'Focolari' Movement in Loppiano*, 10 May 2018.

³⁹ Cf. Francis, *Homily in front of the Shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria*, 22 Sep 2013.

⁴⁰ The wedding feast of Cana is an image of the Church [...] beside Jesus and the disciples is Mary, the provident and prayerful Mother [...]. We have a Mother with benevolent and watchful eyes, like her Son; a heart that is maternal and full of mercy, like him [...] Mary's request clearly shows not only Jesus' messianic power but also his mercy (Francis, *Message for the 24th World Day of the Sick 2016*, 15 Sep 2015).

⁴¹ „Der Glaube des Gottesvolkes ist ein einfacher Glaube, der vielleicht nicht viel Theologie hat, aber er trägt in sich eine Theologie, die nicht irrt, weil in ihr der Heilige Geist ist" (A. Awi Mello, *Mit Maria leben...*, p. 13).

⁴² „Wenn Sie wissen wollen, wer Maria ist, gehen Sie zu einem Theologen, und der wird Ihnen genau sagen, wer Maria ist. Aber wenn Sie wissen wollen, wie man Maria liebt, dann gehen Sie zum Volk Gottes, das Ihnen das am besten beibringen kann" (ibidem). This postulate was repeated by the Pope in the interview with A. Spadaro, *Serce wielkie i otwarte na Boga. Rozmowa z papieżem Franciszkiem. Z objaśnieniami i komentarzami jezuitów*, Kraków 2013, p. 37.

⁴³ Cf. Francis, *Homily in front of the Shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria*, 22 Sep 2013.

precisely – a proof of the filial trust that people place in Mary: “We are not alone, assures the Pope, We have a Mother! [...]. We are not alone. [...] Be sure that the love and tenderness of our Mother does not disappoint us.”⁴⁴

LEADING THEMES

The thematic scale of Francis’s teaching on Mary is broad, since, depending on the feasts and occasional circumstances, he touches upon various truths about her. His Mariology, however, always has a theocentric dimension and is strongly linked to the history of salvation. He presents the mystery of Mary in the essential and inseparable union of the three principles: being of God, being with God and being for God. One can speak of the closeness of God in Mary and through Mary. The Pope assumes that the most important and fundamental is the truth about her Divine Motherhood.⁴⁵ In it the whole doctrine of Mary finds its foundation and light. All the other Marian truths and the corresponding titles follow from it. He devotes more attention and space to some of them. These are not entirely new issues, but are characteristic of him. He focuses on the outline of the salvific ministry of Mary in the Church. He highlights her maternal mediation and multi-dimensional exemplarity. She is the highest synthesis of grace and faith – and as such she is an example of holiness for the Christians (the Immaculate One, the Disciple of Jesus) and apostolic ministry (the Star of the New Evangelization, the Handmaid of man). It is therefore necessary to enter the school of Mary in order to “learn to know Jesus, to live with Jesus and of Jesus present in each one of us and among us.”⁴⁶

The Pope repeatedly emphasizes that in the person of Mary, grace encountered the response of faith. The *fiat* spoken in Nazareth contains both Mary’s obedience to God and her greatness in the history of salvation. She realized that the Lord was calling Her. She trusted Him completely, she trusted His love.⁴⁷ She was able to see the coming of the fullness of time in the gift of the Son (Gal 4:4).⁴⁸ The “Yes” of faith given to God marked the path of Mary’s motherhood. She lived constantly

⁴⁴ Francis, *Homily in the airport of Tacloban*, 17 Jan 2015.

⁴⁵ Cf. Francis, *Homily for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*, 1 Jan 2014.

⁴⁶ Francis, *Homily to the members of the Focolari movement in Loppiano*, 10 May 2018.

⁴⁷ “Hers is a full, total ‘yes’, for her entire life, without conditions. And just as the original ‘no’ closed the passage between man and God, so Mary’s ‘yes’ opened the path to God among us. It is the most important ‘yes’ in history, the humble ‘yes’ which reverses the prideful original ‘no’, the faithful ‘yes’ that heals disobedience, the willing ‘yes’ that overturns the vanity of sin (Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 8 Dec 2016).

⁴⁸ Cf. Francis, *Homily for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*, 1 Jan 2015.

immersed in the mystery of God, who became man, as His first and perfect disciple, pondering every thing in her heart in the light of the Holy Spirit in order to understand and fulfill the whole will of God. In the obedience of faith, she took the life as it was presented to her, with its happy days, but also with its tragedies, until the darkest night when Her Son was nailed to the cross. “In the midst of the darkness of the Passion and death of her Son, continues to believe and to hope in his Resurrection, in the victory of God’s love.”⁴⁹ In this sense, Mary’s *fiat* is the foundation of Christian life. Without the *fiat* there is no Church, there is no Christianity. The Mother’s faith teaches us how to open the doors of our hearts to obey God. It convinces us that the privileged space of God’s work is the freedom of man. This freedom reaches its maturity in faith and openness to grace. “How many times Jesus comes into our lives, and how many times he sends us an angel, and how many times we don’t notice because we are so taken, immersed in our own thoughts, in our own affairs [...] so as not to notice Him who comes and knocks at the door of our hearts, asking for acceptance, asking for a ‘yes’ like Mary’s.”⁵⁰

For Francis, Mary is then the *Hodegetria*, the Mother who indicates the concrete path we are called to follow in order to be true disciples of Christ. She, always chosen to be the Mother of Christ, learned to become a disciple. Her first act was to listen to God. “Mary,” states the Pope, “was accustomed to listening to God and interacting with him. [...] By dwelling with God, in dialogue with him in every circumstance, Mary made her life beautiful.”⁵¹ She opened her heart to receive the mystery of Divine motherhood. “In the fullness of time, God’s word was spoken to Mary and she received that word into her heart, her entire being, so that in her womb it could take flesh and be born as light for humanity.”⁵² In following Jesus, the Mother faithfully imitated her Son. She listened to Him and was guided by His word; she watched how He behaved and set Her feet in His footsteps; she nurtured these same feelings and attitudes that he had.⁵³ She thus became a living memory of the signs he had made to awaken our faith. “We can ask ourselves a question,” the Pope says, “do we allow ourselves to be illumined by the faith of Mary, who is our Mother?”⁵⁴ “In her faith, we learn to open our hearts to obey God.”⁵⁵ Mary constantly shows Jesus and asks: “Do whatever he tells you.” (Jn 2:5).

⁴⁹ Francis, *General Audience*, 1 March 2017. Cf. idem, *General Audience*, 10 May 2017.

⁵⁰ Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 21 Dec 2014.

⁵¹ Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 8 Dec 2017.

⁵² Francis, *Encyclical “Lumen fidei” on faith* (29 June 2013), No. 58 [further on: LF].

⁵³ Cf. Francis, *Catechesis during the Prayer Meeting in St. Peter’s Square*, 12 Oct 2013.

⁵⁴ Franciszek, *Sekret...*, s. 37.

⁵⁵ Francis, *Meditation during the Vigil on the Occasion of the Jubilee*, 8 Oct 2016.

Francis takes over and deepens theologically the images of Mary, “First and perfect disciple of Jesus” and “Remembering Woman,” which the post-conciliar popes introduced into the consciousness of the Church and into the theology. He uses them to show that in the life of the disciple of Jesus it is not enough to listen to the Word of God. This is certainly the first step, but then listening must be translated into concrete actions. First, Mary teaches us to pray with gratitude and memory. Her Magnificat “is a living memory of the fact that God is among us; it is a lasting memory of the fact that God looked at the humility of His people, supported His servant as He promised our fathers and their descendants forever.”⁵⁶ “And this is true – explains the Pope – for each one of us and for every Christian: faith contains our own memory of God’s history with us, the memory of our encountering God who always takes the first step, who creates, saves and transforms us. Faith is remembrance of his word which warms our heart, and of his saving work which gives life, purifies us, cares for and nourishes us.”⁵⁷ We also learn from Mary to be a disciple-missionary. Having received the grace of being the Mother of the Incarnate Word of God, she did not keep this Gift to herself. She felt responsible and set out on the road to bring Jesus, whom she had in her womb, to the house of Elizabeth and Zachariah. This dynamism of going out to others makes her an ecclesial model of evangelization.⁵⁸ The Church is like Mary. “The Church is sent to bring Christ and his Gospel to all. She does not bring herself [...]. If, as a hypothesis, the Church were not to bring Jesus, she would be a dead Church!”⁵⁹

Faith would not have the evangelizing power if it had been deprived of joy. Faith is a necessary gift for fruitful sharing with our neighbor. The Pope looks at Mary with predilection, at her, who is the joyful Handmaid of the Lord and the people, who shows that joy is the sign of the greatness of faith.⁶⁰ “It consists in knowing one is welcomed and loved by God. [...] Christian joy [...] is founded on God’s fidelity, on the certainty that he always keeps his promises [...]. Our joy is Jesus Christ, his faithful love is inexhaustible!”⁶¹ Mary, who was able to discover the newness that Jesus brought, sang, “My spirit rejoices” (Lk 1:47) for going beyond herself and entrusting her life plans to God.⁶² Hence for the Christian, who is not joyful, it means that he has moved away from Jesus. If he/she is truly in love

⁵⁶ Francis, *Homily in the Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy in El Cobre*, 22 Oct 2015.

⁵⁷ Francis, *Homily for the Catechists*, 29 Sep 2013.

⁵⁸ Cf. EG 288.

⁵⁹ Francis, *General Audience*, 23 Oct 2013.

⁶⁰ Cf. LF 58. Francis calls Mary the „Mother of joy”, who teaches us to walk her way of joy (*Catechesis during the prayer meeting at St. Peter’s Square*, 12 Oct 2013).

⁶¹ Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 15 Dec 2013; cf. idem, *Homily in Marian Shrine in Aparecida*, 24 Jul 2013; idem, *Angelus Domini*, 11 Dec 2016.

⁶² Cf. Francis, *Message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, 29 March 2015.

with Christ and feels how much He loves him or her, his/her heart “burns” with so much joy that it is shared with all those who live close to him/her.⁶³ The joy of his heart leads such a person further and gives him/her the courage to preach the Gospel. Fraternal love multiplies this person's “capacity for joy, since it makes us capable of rejoicing in the good of others: ‘Rejoice with those who rejoice’.”⁶⁴

In addition to the mystery of Christ, for Francis the mystery of the Church is the point of reference for the proper development of the doctrine of the Mother of the Lord. What he means is not only seeing Mary as an integral part of the Church, as the Second Vatican Council did,⁶⁵ but also seeing the Church in Mary, as Benedict XVI emphasized, following the Fathers of the Church.⁶⁶ Mary is the beginning and personal concretization of the Church. We find in her the most perfect realization of the Church's being. Everything that is said in the Bible about the Church also applies to Mary; and vice versa, what the Church is and should be, it learns by looking at Mary. Her motherhood does not end with her, but finds its continuation in the motherhood of the Church. The Church is a woman: a bride and a mother.⁶⁷ Just as it is impossible to understand Mary without her motherhood, so it is impossible to understand the Church without her motherhood.⁶⁸ The organic relationship between Mary and the Church makes us discover the most beautiful and sensitive face of the Church when we look at Mary; and when we look at the Church we recognize the noble features of Mary.⁶⁹ This is one of the reasons why Francis established the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, which is celebrated every year, on Monday after the feast of the Pentecost.

⁶³ Cf. Francis, *Homily in Marian Shrine in Aparecida*, 24 Jul 2013.

⁶⁴ Francis, *Apostolic exhortation “Gaudete et exsultate” on the call to holiness in today's world* (19 March 2018), No. 128.

⁶⁵ Cf. G. Greshake, *Maria ist die Kirche. Aktuelle Herausforderung eines alten Themas*, Kevelaer [2018], p. 86.

⁶⁶ Cf. M.G. Masciarelli, *Znak niewiasty. Maryja teologii Josepha Ratzingera*, Kraków 2008, p. 33–35.

⁶⁷ Cf. Francis, *Homily in the House of St. Martha*, 21 May 2018; Francis/M. Pozza, op cit., p. 124; A. Draguła, *Papieża Franciszka metafory Kościoła*, „Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana” 2018, No 1, p. 171. In the presentation of this thought the Pope makes use of the words of Bl. Isaak of Stella, “In the inspired Scriptures, what is said in a universal sense of the virgin mother, the Church, is understood in an individual sense of the Virgin Mary [...] Christ dwelt for nine months in the tabernacle of Mary's womb. He dwells until the end of the ages in the tabernacle of the Church's faith” (PL 194, 1863, 1865 – quote after: EG No 285).

⁶⁸ Cf. Francis, *The meeting with the superiors of female religious orders*, 8 May 2013. “In the face of this [spiritual] ‘being orphaned’, [...] *God can be a Father again only when the Church is a mother*” (M. Borghesi, *Jorge Mario Bergoglio...*, s. 414).

⁶⁹ Cf. Francis, *General audience*, 3 Sep 2014. “In this attitude, which comes from Mary, Mother of the Church [...] we can understand this feminine dimension of the Church: when it is lacking,

Mary is not only the Handmaid of the Lord, but also the Handmaid of man, “the first to show us the way and to accompany us in our witness of love.”⁷⁰ She shows “that the privileged path to serve God is to serve our brothers and sisters in need.”⁷¹ Francis emphasizes on various occasions the Marian character of the “poor Church for the poor.” He argues that Mary teaches us to go out on the paths of visitation, to meet people in order to serve them. In her dedication we discover that we have to be sensitive to the needs of others. In her tears we find the strength to comfort and compassion with those who suffer.⁷² Only then does the encounter with God become credible. The evangelical scenes of Elizabeth’s visitation,⁷³ the wedding reception in Cana⁷⁴ and the Cenacle of Pentecost⁷⁵ are a telling testimony to this. In this way, the teaching of the Pope from Argentina refers on the one hand to the predication of his predecessors in the Holy See: John Paul II, who in his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* called for an “option for the poor,”⁷⁶ and Benedict XVI, who in his encyclical *Deus caritas est* presented Mary as “a woman who loves.”⁷⁷ On the other hand, he goes further when, in the Encyclical *Laudato si’*, he refers the service of Mary to the whole creation. She plays an important role in his concept of “integral ecology” because she surrounds the wounded world with maternal care and is a model for perceiving the world with “wiser eyes.”⁷⁸

Pope Bergoglio also sees Mary as the Mother of Mercy. Above all, in the Year of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, he proclaims that no one has ever known the depths of the mystery of God, who became man, as much as she did. Everything in her life was shaped by the presence of mercy. She entered the sanctuary of mercy because she participated in the mystery of Christ’s love. She thus confirms that the mercy of the Son knows no boundaries and embraces

the Church loses her true identity. [...] It is important that the Church should be a woman, that she should have this approach of the bride and mother. [...] ‘Sensitivity’ is therefore also the ‘attitude of the Church, which feels like a woman and a mother’” (idem, *Homily in the House of St. Martha*, 21 May 2018).

⁷⁰ Francis, “*Misericordia et misera*” (Apostolic letter for the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, 20 Nov 2016).

⁷¹ Francis, *Homily at the former city stadium in Campobasso*, 5 July 2014. “Service is the sign of true love. Those who love know how to serve others” (idem, *Homily in the park Los Samanes in Guayaquil*, 6 July 2015).

⁷² Cf. Francis, *Meditation during the Vigil on the Occasion of the Jubilee*, 8 Oct 2016.

⁷³ Cf. Francis, *Homily at the former city stadium in Campobasso*, 5 July 2014.

⁷⁴ Cf. Francis, *Homily in the park Los Samanes in Guayaquil*, 6 July 2015; idem, Francis, *Message for the 24th World Day of the Sick 2016*, 15 Sep 2015.

⁷⁵ Cf. Francis, *Homily in front of the Shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria*, 22 Sep 2013.

⁷⁶ RM 37.

⁷⁷ DCE 41.

⁷⁸ Francis, *Encyclical “Laudato si’” on care for our common home* (24 May 2015).

everybody, without excluding anyone.⁷⁹ Her canticle helps to understand God's mercy as the driving force behind the personal history of each of us and of the whole of humanity.⁸⁰ The mystery of her immaculate conception proclaims the primacy of grace: "This is *the love of God which precedes, anticipates and saves*."⁸¹ His grace is able to transform man's heart and human history. We are called, by the example of Mary, to receive in full the merciful grace of God and then to be its witnesses on the evangelical journey. This is what the work of the new evangelization is all about.⁸² That is why the Pope entrusts the Church to the Mother of mercy, so that her maternal intercession with God may help us in this engaging mission.⁸³

The Gospels, as Francis observes, suggest another word about Mary: hope. Her whole life has been a set of attitudes expressing hope. The mother of Jesus was "a woman of expectation and hope."⁸⁴ She did not lose heart in the face of life's difficulties and uncertainties inherent in God's plan. Her hope was nourished by "listening, contemplation and patience until the time of the Lord is ripe."⁸⁵ She always trusted the mystery of God, even when He seemed invisible because of the evil in the world.⁸⁶ For this reason, she is "the mother of hope, the icon that most fully expresses Christian hope."⁸⁷ She teaches us the virtue of waiting even when everything seems meaningless. He testifies to the example of his life that "For us Christians, wherever the Cross is, there is hope, always. If there is no hope, we are not Christian. That is why," Francis continues, "I like to say: do not allow yourselves to be robbed of hope. May we not be robbed of hope, because this strength is a grace, a gift from God which carries us forward with our eyes fixed on heaven."⁸⁸ The Marian *Magnificat* is also the hymn of the Christians on their way through history, who place their hope in God, in the power of His mercy.⁸⁹ Therefore, we owe much to the Mother of hope. She supports us in moments

⁷⁹ Cf. Francis, "*Misericordiae vultus*" (Bull announcing the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, 11 April 2015), No. 24.

⁸⁰ Cf. Francis, *Message for the 32nd World Youth Day 2017*, 27 Feb 2017.

⁸¹ Francis, *Homily for the inauguration of the Jubilee*, 8 Dec 2015.

⁸² Cf. Francis, *Speech to the participants of the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization*, 29 May 2015.

⁸³ Cf. *ibidem*.

⁸⁴ Francis, *Homily during the Vespers in the Roman cloister of St. Anthony the abbot*, 21 Dec 2013.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁶ Cf. Francis, *General audience*, 10 May 2017.

⁸⁷ Francis, *Homily during the Vespers in the Roman cloister of St. Anthony the abbot*, 21 Nov 2013.

⁸⁸ Francis, *Homily for the Solemnity of Assumption of BMV*, 15 Aug 2013. Cf. P. Warchoł, *Maryja...*, p. 232.

⁸⁹ Cf. Franciszek, *Angelus Domini*, 1 Dec 2013.

of darkness, difficulty, discouragement and human disasters.⁹⁰ It is worth letting her guide us on the path of the pilgrimage of faith, so that “she may always say to our hearts: ‘Arise! Look forward, look to the horizon’.”⁹¹

Therefore the Pope appeals: „May she – our Mother – teach us to be unafraid of tenderly welcoming the outcast; not to be afraid of tenderness. How often we fear tenderness! May Mary teach us not to be afraid of tenderness and compassion.” Only love is credible – this is the only evangelical way, on which Christianity can be renewed with the same dynamism it had at its beginnings.

The Pope’s favourite Marian motif is tenderness. “There is a word, he admits, which is very close to my heart: *tenderness*.”⁹² He calls Mary “the Queen” and “the Mother of tenderness.”⁹³ And in the *Evangelii gaudium* he confesses that every time we look at Mary, we begin to believe in the revolutionary power of tenderness.⁹⁴ We are a people with a mother, not orphans.⁹⁵ “And where there is a mother, there is always the presence and flavour of home.”⁹⁶ Our Mother’s love never fails. In particular, the Marian shrines, which are written into the history of every nation that has received the Gospel, are her home. Pilgrims feel at home in them. They entrust to the Mother their joys and sorrows, hopes and needs, and she leads them into the presence of her Son, Jesus Christ. They will then feel His love, they will experience His tender mercy.⁹⁷ The dynamics of the Mother’s tenderness inspire them to open their hearts to others, to look at themselves fraternally: open to welcome, accompany and care.⁹⁸ The Christian revolution is accomplished through tenderness, which is closeness, compassion and leads to the service of others. Therefore the Pope appeals: “May she – our Mother – teach us to be unafraid of tenderly welcoming the outcast; not to be afraid of tenderness. How

⁹⁰ Francis, *Homily during the Vespers in the Roman cloister of St. Anthony the abbot*, 21 Nov 2013.

⁹¹ Francis, *General audience*, 10 May 2017.

⁹² Francis/M. Pozza, op. cit., p. 54.

⁹³ Francis, *Message on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the coronation of the picture of Our Lady of Czestochowa*, 26 Aug 2017; idem, *Message for the World Day of the Sick 2018*, 26 Nov 2017.

⁹⁴ Cf. EG 288.

⁹⁵ Cf. Francis, *Homily for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*, 1 Jan 2017.

⁹⁶ Francis, *Homily for the liturgical commemoration of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 12 Dec 2016.

⁹⁷ Cf. Francis, *Speech in the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Madhu*, 14 Jan 2015.

⁹⁸ Cf. Francis, *Homily in front of the Shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria*, 22 Sep 2013. “We want to meet her maternal gaze. The gaze that frees us from being orphans; the gaze that reminds us that we are brothers and sisters, that I belong to you, that you belong to me, that we are of the same flesh. The gaze that teaches us that we have to learn how to care for life in the same way and with the same tenderness that she did: by sowing hope, by sowing a sense of belonging and of fraternity” (idem, *Homily on the solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God*, 1 Jan 2017).

often we fear tenderness! May Mary teach us not to be afraid of tenderness and compassion.”⁹⁹ Only love is credible – this is the only evangelical way, on which Christianity can be renewed with the same dynamism it had at its beginnings.

CONCLUSION

The article is an attempt to read the particularity of the Mariology of Pope Francis in the first six years of his pontificate. Even if only for these reasons, it does not claim it could exhaust all the issues which its title entails. Reading the results of the research, we can see that the Marian teaching of the Pope from Argentina is a clear mark of his pontificate. It stems both from his personal conviction and, to a certain extent, from his “official necessity.” He takes the mystery of Mary from a historical-soteriological perspective, inspired by the biblical Mariology and the Second Vatican Council. Mary is the privileged “place” of God’s activity. She responded to it with the obedience of faith. Therefore, the Pope highlights the greatness of the Mother of Jesus because of her faith, hope and love. In this perspective, he discusses the various dogmatic truths that reflect the mystery of Mary’s person and ministry. She is present in many ways in the mystery of Christ and the Church.

The Francis’s Mariology has an outstanding existential character. He wants to shape authentic spirituality and Marian devotion. For Pope Bergoglio, Mary is an expression of God’s closeness. In Her and through Her, God becomes a brother and companion of our path. Therefore we must return to the truth about Mary if we wish to return to the truth about Christ. Indeed, repeats Francis after Paul VI, “if we want to be Christian, we must be Marian; in a word, we have to acknowledge the essential, vital and providential relationship uniting Our Lady to Jesus, a relationship that opens before us the way leading to Him.”¹⁰⁰ From Mary we learn to be true disciples of Christ. Her maternal gaze leads us to Him. And that is why the Church sets out on the paths of the new evangelization, on her way always together with Mary – following Her example and under the care of Her tender love.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Awi Mello A., *Mit Maria leben. Ein Gespräch mit Papst Franziskus*, Leipzig [2016].
Francis, “*Misericordiae vultus*” (Bull announcing the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, 11 April 2015).

⁹⁹ Francis, *Homily for the new cardinals*, 15 Feb 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Francis, *Speech to the faithful during the prayer vigil – blessing of the candles*, 12 May 2017.

- Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 15 Dec 2013.
- Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 15 June 2014.
- Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 8 Dec 2014.
- Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 21 Dec 2014.
- Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 1 Jan 2015.
- Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 20 Dec 2015.
- Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 8 Dec 2016.
- Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 14 May 2017.
- Francis, *Angelus Domini*, 8 Dec 2017.
- Francis, Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelii gaudium*” on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world (24 Nov 2013).
- Francis, Apostolic Exhortation “*Gaudete et exsultate*” on the call to holiness in today’s world (19 March 2018).
- Francis, *Catechesis during the prayer meeting at St. Peter’s square* (12 Oct 2013).
- Francis, Encyclical “*Laudato si*” on care for our common home (24 May 2015).
- Francis, Encyclical “*Lumen fidei*” on faith (29 June 2013).
- Francis, *General audience*, 23 Oct 2013.
- Francis, *General audience*, 3 Sep 2014.
- Francis, *General audience*, 10 May 2017.
- Francis, *Homily at the airport of Tacloban*, 17 Jan 2015.
- Francis, *Homily at the former city stadium in Campobasso*, 5 July 2014.
- Francis, *Homily during the Holy Mass on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, 15 Aug 2013.
- Francis, *Homily during the Vespers in the Roman cloister of St. Anthony the abbot*, 21 Nov 2013.
- Francis, *Homily for the Catechists*, 29 Sep 2013.
- Francis, *Homily for the inauguration of the Jubilee of Mercy*, 8 Dec 2015.
- Francis, *Homily for the new cardinals*, 15 Feb 2015.
- Francis, *Homily for the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God*, 1 Jan 2017.
- Francis, *Homily for the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God*, 1 Jan 2014.
- Francis, *Homily in front of the Shrine of Our Lady of Bonaria*, 22 Sep 2013.
- Francis, *Homily in the House of St. Martha*, 15 Sep 2016.
- Francis, *Homily in the House of St. Martha*, 21 May 2018.
- Francis, *Homily in the Marian Shrine in Aparecida*, 24 Aug 2013.
- Francis, *Homily in the park Los Samanes in Guayaquil*, 6 Jul 2015.
- Francis, *Homily in the shrine of Our Lady of Mercy in El Cobre*, 22 Sep 2015.
- Francis, *Homily on the 100th Anniversary of the First Apparition in Fatima*, 13 May 2017.
- Francis, *Homily on the occasion of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 12 Dec 2015.
- Francis, *Homily on the occasion of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 12 Dec 2016.

- Francis, *Meditation during the Vigil on the Occasion of the Jubilee*, 8 Oct 2016.
- Francis, *Meeting with clergy, religious and seminarians in the National Marian Shrine El Quinche, Quito, Ecuador*, 8 July 2015.
- Francis, *Message for the 24th World Day of the Sick 2016*, 25 Sep 2015.
- Francis, *Message for the World Day of the Sick 2018*, 26 Nov 2017.
- Francis, *Message on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the coronation of the picture of Our Lady of Czestochowa*, 26 Aug 2017.
- Francis, *Speech in the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Madhu*, 14 Jan 2015.
- Francis, *Speech to the faithful during the prayer vigil*, 12 May 2017.
- Francis, *Speech to the members of 'Focolari' Movement in Loppiano*, 10 May 2018.
- Scaraffia L., *Jak nasze matki i nasze babcie. Papież Franciszek o Matce Bożej na początku miesiąca maryjnego*, „Osservatore Romano”, Polish ed. 34 (2013), No. 6, p. 3.
- Warchoł P., *Maryja w nauczaniu papieża Franciszka*, „Salvatoris Mater” 19 (2017), No 1–4, p. 216–237.

Keywords: Mary, Mariology, Pope Francis

W POSZUKIWANIU SPECYFIKI MARIOLOGII PAPIEŻA FRANCISZKA

Streszczenie

Franciszek jest papieżem maryjnym. Jego dotychczas sześćioletni pontyfikat owocuje sporą liczbą wypowiedzi poświęconych Maryi (ok. 130). Powtarzalność pewnych tematów oraz wyrażeń pozwala mówić o specyfice jego mariologii i wydobywać wątki nowe i oryginalne. Artykuł czyni to w dwóch punktach. Pierwszy dotyczy metodologii Franciszkowej mariologii. Jest ona „mariologią w kontekście”, historiozabawczą, respektującą zasadę *nexus mysteriorum*. Jej *loci theologici* są Biblia, odczytywana w całości; mariologia soborowa; *theologia mentis* i *theologia cordis*, która rodzi się z religijnego doświadczenia. Posiada ona zabarwienie wybitnie pastoralne. Drugi punkt spośród obszernej skali tematycznej wypowiedzi o Maryi wyróżnia te, które są bliskie Franciszkowi: Matka Boga – synteza łaski i wiary; Maryja – osobowa konkretyzacja Kościoła; *Hodegetria* – pierwsza i doskonała uczennica Chrystusa; Służebnica człowieka; Ikona i Matka miłosierdzia; Gwiazda nowej ewangelizacji, Królowa czułości.

Słowa kluczowe: Maryja, mariologia, papież Franciszek