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The Role of the Principles of Catholic Social Teaching in Building a Post-Pandemic World Based on the 2020 Catecheses of Pope Francis. An Outline of the Issue

ROLA ZASAD KATOLICKIEJ NAUKI SPOŁECZNEJ W BUDOWANIU ŚWIATA PO PANDEMII NA PODSTAWIE KATECHEZ PAPIEŻA FRANCISZKA Z 2020 ROKU. ZARYS PROBLEMATYKI

Streszczenie

Kolejne kryzysy współczesnego świata otwierają nowe pola refleksji nad kondycją moralną człowieka. Ważnym wyzwaniem początku trzeciego tysiąclecia okazała się pandemia koronawirusa, wywołującego chorobę COVID-19. Głównym celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza katechez środowych papieża Franciszka, wygłoszonych w sierpniu i wrześniu 2020 r. pod zbiorczym tytułem „Uleczyć świat”. Papież porusza w nich problematykę aktualności katolickiej nauki społecznej i przypomina, że budowanie świata w czasie po pandemii powinno uwzględniać przede wszystkim adekwatną antropologię oraz godność każdej osoby ludzkiej. W nawiązaniu do tradycyjnej nauki moralnej kolejne katechezy dotyczyły aktualizacji następujących zasad: godności osoby, wspólnego dobra, opcji preferencyjnej na rzecz ubogich, powszechnego przeznaczenia dóbr, solidarności, pomocniczości oraz troski o wspólny dom. W papieskich tekstach interesujące jest połączenie tych zasad z cnotami teologicznymi wiary, nadziei i miłości, co jeszcze bardziej ujawnia istotę życia chrześcijańskiego, wyrażającego się w wezwaniu do przynoszenia owoców miłości za życie świata. Nawiązaniem i rozszerzeniem Franciszkowej myśli o konieczności odwołania do etyki w ocenie życia publicznego jest projekt *The Economy of Francesco*, związany ze spotkaniem młodych w Asyżu, oparty na konsultacjach w dwunastu „wioskach tematycznych”, a także obrazujący na konkretnych przykładach, jak można łączyć wiarę, ekonomię, etykę i życie społeczne. W tej perspektywie przywołana przez Franciszka nauka społeczna Kościoła wydaje się ciągle wartościowa i aktualna w kwestii konstruktywnej propozycji odnowy świata.

Słowa kluczowe: Franciszek, katechezy, katolicka nauka społeczna, uleczyć świat, zasady społeczne

1. Changing epochs and social teaching

The rapid changes in the world, as well as the new challenges brought about by the time of the pandemic during the pontificate of Pope Francis, demand new and adequate responses. Among the many diagnoses of modernity made by Pope Francis, the most noteworthy is undoubtedly his statement about the change of epoch taking place. This resonated particularly in 2019 during his Christmas address to the employees of the Roman Curia. Analysing the changes taking place in the world, also in relation to the development of Catholic thought, the Pope acknowledged that “what we are experiencing is not simply an epoch of changes, but an epochal change. We find ourselves living at a time when change is no longer linear, but epochal.”¹ The various forms of human existence and functioning among each other are changing very rapidly, ever faster ways of communicating and living out faith, culture and science are emerging, and a pressing moral challenge is to assess the directions of artificial intelligence.²

This perspective raises the question of the nature of these changes and how Christian thought can respond to them. In the aforementioned address to the curia, Francis therefore postulates that these changes should become human and, at the same time, increasingly infused with the Christian spirit, which is why it is important to undertake an “anthropological conversion.” He also expresses the hope and at the same time the conviction that the moral principles known to date, such as those of Catholic social teaching, can also be used in times of change to evaluate the processes taking place and to design the world according to an inspiration based on the Gospel.

An example of the development of papal teaching on this matter is the catecheses delivered in 2020 on the healing of the post-pandemic world. They fit perfectly into Francis’ pontificate programme woven around social issues close to the Latin American world, yet somewhat forgotten in the reality of a faith-weary West. The appeal to the dignity of the person and the proper understanding of the common good find practical expression in many of Francis’ texts and demonstrate the timeless character of the norms of Catholic morality.³ In the programmatic exhortation

1 Francis, *Christmas greetings to the Roman Curia (21 December 2019)*, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/december/documents/papa-francesco_20191221_curia-romana.html [accessed: 01.03.2023].

2 Cf. W. Kućko, *Moralne aspekty reformy Kurii Rzymskiej w przemówieniach papieża Franciszka do kurialistów w latach 2013–2021*, “Teologia i Moralność” 17 (2022) 2 (32), pp. 169–188.

3 For more on social issues in Francis’ teaching cf., e.g.: M. Toso, “*Caritas in veritate*” ed “*Evan-gelii gaudium*”: *continuità e conseguenze per la nuova evangelizzazione del sociale*, in: Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e della Pace, *La dimensione sociale della fede oggi*. “*Caritas in*

Evangelii gaudium, he asked that practical conclusions be drawn from social principles because “it is no longer possible to claim that religion should be restricted to the private sphere and that it exists only to prepare souls for heaven.”⁴ Conversion is also expressed in the creation of social order and the pursuit of the proper realisation of the common good.

It is worth pointing to other sources to describe Francis’ social teaching. In his 2015 encyclical *Laudato si’*, which appreciates the value of relationships and connections in the world while very much acknowledging the shortcomings of the “technocratic model,” the Pope outlines the consequences of a falsified anthropology: “Often, what was handed on was a Promethean vision of mastery over the world, which gave the impression that the protection of nature was something that only the faint-hearted cared about. Instead, our ‘dominion’ over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship.”⁵ An important clarification is provided by the provisions of the 2020 encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, where the proper functioning of society is presented on the basis of the model of the polyhedron, which captures the essence of diversity in the world, and the consequent need to respect each person, each individual.⁶

2. Social catecheses of 2020 – the truth about the world

While the pandemic of the coronavirus causing the COVID-19 disease was still ongoing, Pope Francis decided to present a coherent programme for the moral renewal of a world affected not only by somatic contamination, but also suffering from many spiritual wounds.⁷ At the centre of his reflections, he decided to put the human being understood as a person again, in order to reread, in the context

veritate” e “*Evangelii gaudium*”. *Testi della XXVIII Assemblea plenaria del Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e della Pace*, Città del Vaticano 2015, pp. 17–42; T. Rossi, *La “Laudato si’”: elementi per un’ermeneutica del pensiero di papa Francesco*, “*Angelicum*” 93 (2016) 1, pp. 157–190; M. Sadowski, *Kilka uwag o nauczaniu społecznym Franciszka*, “*Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Lublin – Polonia. Sectio G*” 66 (2019) 1, pp. 351–362; M. Czerny, Ch. Barone, *Attualizzare e rinnovare la dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, “*La Civiltà Cattolica*” (2023) 4150, pp. 319–333.

- 4 Francis, *Apostolical Exhortation “Evangelii gaudium”* (24 November 2013), Vatican City 2013, no. 182.
- 5 Cf. Francis, *Encyclical Letter “Laudato si’”* (24 May 2015), Vatican City 2015, no. 116.
- 6 Cf. idem, *Encyclical Letter “Fratelli tutti”* (3 October 2020), Vatican City 2020, nos. 144, 145, 190, 215.
- 7 For more on experiencing a pandemic cf. T. Drożyński, *Oblicza wiary w czasie pandemii COVID-19. Koronawirusowy akrostych*, Tarnów 2020; S. Jeziorski, *Bóg, Kościół i świat wobec Covid-19. „Lex orandi” jako inspiracja chrześcijańskiego przeżywania czasu pandemii*, “*Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny*” 73 (2020) 2, pp. 101–116.

of the change of epoch, the well-known and, as it turns out, extremely valid elementary principles of Catholic social teaching. In this way, Francis pointed out the importance of building every civilisation and seeing every change in the perspective of the truth about man, often relativised or diluted or even denied today. He also posed the question: in what sense are contemporary Christians called to continue Christ's "work of healing and salvation" in the physical, social and spiritual sense?⁸

In response, with reference to the teaching of Paul VI, Francis recognises that it is not the task of the Church to formulate ready-made socio-political guidelines. There are, however, general norms in the Catholic Magisterium, social principles that can be helpful in building a world around human beings in a time of epochal change. Of those discussed in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Pope Bergoglio refers to seven: the principle of the dignity of the person, the principle of the common good, the principle of the preferential option for the poor, the principle of the universal destination of goods, the principle of solidarity, the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of care for the common home.⁹ These principles derive from the wealth of teaching of previous popes and other texts of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, which have often given rise to important discussions on social and moral issues.¹⁰

- 8 Francis, *Catechesis: "Healing the world": 1. Introduction. General audience* (5 August 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200805_udienza-generale.html [accessed: 01.03.2023].
- 9 Cf. *ibidem*; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, London 2005, nos. 160–208; cf. R. Czekalski, *Rozwój katolickiej nauki społecznej po Soborze Watykańskim II ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem pontyfikatu Jana Pawła II*, "Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne" 24 (2011) 1, pp. 45–62.
- 10 A basic analysis of nos. 160–208 of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* points to the most important sources of these principle of social life (in chronological order): Leo XIII, *Encyclical Letter "Rerum novarum"* (15 May 1891), London 1964; Pius XI, *Encyclical Letter "Quadragesimo anno"* (15 May 1931), Melbourne 1931; John XXIII, *"Mater et Magistra". Christianity and Social Progress. An Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul XXIII*, New York 1961; *idem*, *"Pacem in terris". Encyclical Letter on Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity and Liberty* (11 April 1963), London 2022; Paul VI, *The Great Social Problem. Encyclical Letter "Populorum progressio"* (26 March 1967), London 1968; *idem*, *"Octogesima adveniens". Apostolic Letter to Cardinal Maurice Roy on the 80th Anniversary of the Encyclical "Rerum Novarum"* (14 May 1971), Washington DC 1971; John Paul II, *"Redemptor hominis". Encyclical Letter* (4 March 1979), London 2002; *idem*, *Encyclical "Laborem exercens"* (14 September 1981), Melbourne 1982; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation "The Truth Makes Us Free"* (22 March 1986), Boston 1986; Pontifical Commission "Iustitia et Pax", *At the Service of the Human Community: An Ethical Approach to the International Debt Question* (27 December 1986), Vatican City 1986; John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter "Sollicitudo rei socialis"* (30 December 1987), Boston MA 1987; Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching*

In Pope Francis' speeches, it is interesting to combine the principles in question with the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, in the light of which the essence of the Christian life is more clearly seen, expressed in the call to bear the fruits of love for the life of the world.¹¹

Delivered from 5 August to 30 September 2020, the Wednesday catecheses have been given the eloquent title "Healing the world." The nine texts are fed very abundantly with Scripture and references to previously known documents of the Church's social teaching. The content scheme and the connection of the individual principles to the theological virtues are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Content of Francis' catecheses on healing the world after the COVID-19 pandemic*

No.	Date	Title of the catechesis (according to the website of the holy see)	Catholic social teaching principle discussed	Related virtue
1.	5 August 2020	<i>Healing the world. Introduction</i>	introduction	faith, hope, love
2.	12 August 2020	<i>Faith and human dignity</i>	principle of human dignity	faith
3.	19 August 2020	<i>The preferential option for the poor and the virtue of charity</i>	principle of the preferential option for the poor	love
4.	26 August 2020	<i>The universal destination of goods and the virtue of hope</i>	principle of universal destination	hope
5.	2 September 2020	<i>Solidarity and the virtue of faith</i>	principle of solidarity	faith
6.	9 September 2020	<i>Love and the common good</i>	principle of common good	love
7.	16 September 2020	<i>Care for the common home and a contemplative dimension</i>	principle of care for the common home	hope
8.	23 September 2020	<i>Subsidiarity and virtue of hope</i>	principle of subsidiarity	hope
9.	30 September 2020	<i>Preparing the future together with Jesus who saves and heals</i>	summary	faith, hope, love

Source: *Self-analysis*.

of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests (30 December 1988), Rome 1988; John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter "Centesimus annus"* (1 May 1991), Vatican City 1991.

¹¹ Cf. The Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Priestly Training "Optatam totius"*, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html [accessed: 01.03.2023], no. 16.

Among the main sources of Francis' thought are: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, the conciliar constitution *Gaudium et spes*, and the social documents of Pius XI, Paul VI, Benedict XVI and John Paul II. A detailed list of the citations concluded in the "Healing the world" catecheses is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Citations concluded in the "Healing the world" catecheses in 2020

No.	Document category	Citations
1	2	3
1.	Old Testament biblical texts	Gen 1:27; 1:28; 2:15 (four times); 11:1-9
2.	New Testament biblical texts	Matt 4:17; 5:3; 5:44; 7:21-27; 9:35; 10; 11:5; 14:13-21; 17:5; 20:20-28; 20:29-34; 25; 25:31-36; Mark 1:5; 1:29-34; 1:40-45; 2:1-2; 2:1-12; 2:5; 2:11; 8:22-26; Luke 6:20; 10:1-9; 10:11; 10:30-32; John 5:6-9; 9:1-7; 13:1; 15:9-17; Acts 2:1-3; 4:32-35; 1 Cor 12:22; 13:13; 2 Cor 5:17; 8:9; Gal 2:10; Eph 1:3-5; Phil 2:6-7; Col 1:19-20; Heb 12:2 (twice); 1 John 4:19
3.	Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World <i>Gaudium et spes</i>	Nos. 12; 69; 71
4.	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>	Nos. 339; 1421 (twice); 1812-1812; 1905-1906; 1907-1912; 1939-1940; 2402 (twice); 2404; 2406; 2443; 2444; 2816
5.	<i>Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church</i>	Nos. 157 (twice); 160-208; 185; 186; 192
6.	Pius XI's texts	<i>Encyclical Letter "Quadragesimo anno"</i> (1931), nos. 79-80
7.	Paul VI's texts	<i>Apostolic Letter "Octogesima adveniens"</i> (1971), no. 4; <i>Message for the 10th World Day of Peace 1 Jan. 1977</i>
8.	John Paul II's texts	<i>Address to the UN General Assembly, 2 October 1979</i> ; <i>Encyclical Letter "Laborem exercens"</i> (1981), nos. 19; <i>Encyclical "Sollicitudo rei socialis"</i> (1987), nos. 36; 38; 38-40; 42 (twice); <i>Letter to all the bishops of the Catholic Church on the situation in Lebanon (7 Sept. 1989)</i> (twice); <i>Encyclical "Centesimus annus"</i> (1991), nos. 40, 48; <i>Address to the UN General Assembly, 5 Oct. 1995</i> ; <i>Homily in Sopot, 5 June 1999</i> ; <i>Address in Zamość, 12 June 1999</i>
9.	Benedict XVI's texts	<i>Homily at the Opening of the Pontificate</i> (24 April 2005); <i>Opening Address of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, 13 May 2007</i> , no. 32

1	2	3
10.	Francis' texts	<i>Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii gaudium"</i> (2013), nos. 53; 54; 183; 187; 188; 195 (three times); 197; 198; 204; <i>Encyclical "Laudato si"</i> (2015), nos. 8; 11; 19; 22; 49; 53; 63; 65; 66; 67 (twice); 69; 70; 85; 93; 101; 109; 137–138; 158 (twice); 215; 220; 231 (twice); 236; 239; <i>Address to young people at the Cultural Centre of Fr. Félix Varela in Havana, Cuba</i> (20 September 2015); <i>Message for the World Day of Peace on 1 January 2019</i> ; <i>Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Querida Amazonia"</i> (2020), nos. 9; 14; 32; <i>Message for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees</i> (13 May 2020)
11.	Texts of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith	<i>Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation "The Truth Makes Us Free"</i> , no. 5
12.	St Bonaventure's texts	<i>Legenda maior</i> VIII, 6
13.	Texts of St Ignatius Loyola	<i>Spiritual exercises</i>

Source: Self-analysis.

The foundation of the papal reflections, described in the first catechesis on the healing of the world, is the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, which are meant to be a new inspiration for undertaking renewal in the spirit of creativity and restoration of justice. This was also the method used by Christ himself in the process of restoration: "Christ's action is a direct response to the faith of those people, to the hope they put in Him, to the love they show that they have for each other. And so, Jesus heals, but He does not simply heal the paralysis. Jesus heals everyone, He forgives sins, He renews the life of the paralyzed man and his friend."¹²

In the following catechesis, Francis outlined the anthropological foundation of the question of an adequate understanding of man in the face of a culture of rejection which transforms man into a good to be used and consumed.¹³ The starting point is the creation of man in the image and likeness of God, described in the pages of Genesis (cf. especially Gen 1-2), from which stems a unique dignity and a vocation to live in harmony with the world. The opposite of this harmony, says the Pope, is an individualistic view of others, a logic of domination and

12 Francis, *Catechesis: "Healing the world": 1. Introduction*. More on theological virtues in social life: J. Bramorski, *Cnoty teologalne w życiu moralnym chrześcijanina*, "Studia Gdańskie" 23 (2008), pp. 31–75; J. Zabielski, *Aretologiczne „umocowanie” życia społeczno-moralnego*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 8 (2009), pp. 64–78.

13 A comprehensive and in-depth study on the subject is presented by: P. Sproncel, *Kultura tymczasowości jako wyzwanie dla duszpasterstwa Kościoła w świetle nauczania Papieża Franciszka. Studium teologiczno-pastoralne*, Kraków 2022.

control, often combined with indifference, outlined, for example, in the questioning of the mother of Zebedee's sons (cf. Mt 20:20-28). Francis recalled John Paul II's opinion on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is "a milestone on the long and difficult path of the human race."¹⁴ Significant challenges arise from it for social, political and economic life, which can be centred around the central idea of an all-human fraternity, opposed to a culture of rejection and a culture of indifference.¹⁵

The third principle discussed by Francis is the preferential option in favour of the poor, which is not an ideological, partisan or political choice, but stands at the centre of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The first to make this choice is Jesus: "Since He was rich, He made Himself poor to enrich us" – explained the Pope.¹⁶ This choice points to the "key criterion of Christian authenticity" of Mt 25, which does not merely verify the Christian's commitment to basic care, but, in the power of faith, hope and love, opens up ever new horizons of poverty.¹⁷ It is therefore important not only to go to the periphery, as the Pope consistently and repeatedly mentions in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*,¹⁸ but also to try to "placing the peripheries at the centre and the last in first place," that is, to focus the Church's attention on Christ who became poor for us.¹⁹ The way out of the crises caused by the pandemic is thus to be expressed in the rectification of deficiencies and various

14 Quoted by: Francis, *Catechesis "Healing the world": 2. Faith and human dignity* (12 August 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200812_udienza-generale.html [accessed: 01.03.2023]. Francis gave extensive reflections on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in early 2018 during an address to members of the Diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See on the 70th anniversary of the document's adoption. Cf. Francesco, *Summus Pontifex Corpori Legatorum apud Sanctam Sedem creditorum omina in novum annum expromit*, "Acta Apostolicae Sedis" 110 (2018) 2, pp. 208–221. Also cf.: R. Moń, A. Kobyliński (eds.), *Prawa człowieka i świat wartości*, Warszawa 2011.

15 More on fraternity in Francis' teaching up to the publication of the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* cf. W. Kućko, *Fraternity in the Teaching of Pope Francis*, "Collectanea Theologica" 90 (2020) 5, pp. 701–740.

16 Francis, *Catechesis "Healing the world": 3. The preferential option for the poor and the virtue of charity* (19 August 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200819_udienza-generale.html [accessed: 01.03.2023]. Cf. on this subject: M. Duda, *Opcja preferencyjna na rzecz ubogich w obszarze polityki społecznej – wybrane zagadnienia z nauczania społecznego Kościoła*, "Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu" (2010) 146, pp. 81–94; A. Pietrzak, *Opcja na rzecz ubogich*, "Studia Nauk Teologicznych" 8 (2013), pp. 47–62.

17 Francis, *Catechesis "Healing the world": 3. The preferential option for the poor and the virtue of charity*.

18 Cf. idem, *Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii gaudium"*, nos. 20, 46, 53, 59, 63, 191, 197, 288.

19 Idem, *Catechesis "Healing the world": 3. The preferential option for the poor and the virtue of charity*.

forms of injustice, as well as greater care for the damaged environment. Among the pressing problems to be solved, Francis mentioned: strengthening the economy of integral development of the poor, spreading voluntary work, creating decent jobs, setting the right priorities in the allocation of vaccines and even – a rather specific hint – supporting industrial plants in need of assistance, but those that “contribute to the inclusion of the excluded, to the promotion of the last, to the common good and the care of creation.”²⁰ For the viruses of modernity are not only invisible infectious particles, but above all those ways of thinking and attitudes that result in injustice and exclusion.

The fourth principle discussed by the Pope of Argentina is the universal destination of goods, linked to the theological virtue of hope.²¹ The 2020 pandemic has already revealed the social inequalities already known, the unjust distribution of wealth, the waste of financial and human resources. It is therefore a sin crying to heaven that in today’s world “a few wealthy people, a small group, possess more than all the rest of humanity,” a symptom of a “sick economy.”²² It is the result not only of the mismanagement of goods, but above all of the lust to rule over one’s brothers and the world. The reflections contained in the Encyclical *Laudato si’* on the understanding of God’s command to rule the earth (cf. Gen 1:28) are recalled here, which cannot be an arbitrary action not based on reference to God. The use of earthly goods presupposes reckoning with the earth itself, which existed before human beings, while at the same time managing these goods. This must be guided by the principle of the subordination of private property to the common use of goods, which John Paul II wrote about in his social encyclicals. If property begins to conflict with human values, then, says Francis, “the *homo sapiens* is deformed and becomes a species of *homo œconomicus* – in a detrimental sense – a species of man that is individualistic, calculating and domineering.”²³ Only man in the world is able to “flourish in community,” which is also expressed in hope rooted in God.

20 Ibidem.

21 On the principle of universal destination of goods cf.: F. Kampka, *Etyczny wymiar własności prywatnej*, “Ethos” 8 (1995) 4, pp. 51–63; J. Koperek, *Poszanowanie prawa do własności prywatnej w kontekście zasady uniwersalnego przeznaczenia dóbr*, “Annales. Etyka w Życiu Gospodarczym” 10 (2007) 1, pp. 41–48; J. Szulist, *Rola sprawiedliwej płacy w kształtowaniu wolności odpowiedzialnej człowieka*, “Studia Koszalińsko-Kołobrzeszkie” (2016) 23, pp. 321–335.

22 Francis, *Catechesis “Healing the world”: 4. The universal destination of goods and the virtue of hope* (26 August 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200826_udienza-generale.html [accessed: 01.03.2023].

23 Ibidem.

Another fifth step of the papal reflections was to see the principle of solidarity in the recovery from the pandemic crisis.²⁴ In Francis' view, the world is a network of various interrelationships, it has the character of a "global village," but this does not mean that these interrelationships are always of a solidarity nature. Therefore, solidarity is always linked to justice: "Interdependence, to be in solidarity and to bear fruit, needs strong roots in humanity and in nature, created by God; it needs respect for faces and for the land."²⁵ In the power of the Spirit who came on the day of Pentecost, the Christian can oppose the culture of egoism and seek ways of unity to become an instrument to build community and fraternity, following the example of St Francis, who gave persons and even creatures the names of brother and sister. Using the language of medicine, the Pope explained: "A diversity in solidarity possesses 'antibodies' that ensure that the singularity of each person – which is a gift, unique and unrepeatable – does not become sick with individualism, with selfishness."²⁶ A crisis is a moment of necessity to decide – to follow the path of solidarity and goodness or to make things worse.²⁷

The sixth papal indication was a reference to the principle of the common good linked to the virtue of charity.²⁸ It implies once again the necessity to opt for the particular good or the common good. The Christian response to the pandemic crises is based on love – on the one hand it is about the love of God, on the other hand it is about the creation of bonds between two or three persons, as well as in the broader

24 On the principle of solidarity: N.M. Ruman, *Solidarność jako cnota moralna – postawą i zasadą życia ludzkiego według myśli Jana Pawła II w percepcji wychowawczej*, "Studia Pedagogiczne (Kielce)" 23 (2014), pp. 73–93; J. Szulist, *Źródła solidarności na przykładzie „Orędzia na Światowy Dzień Pokoju 2014” papieża Franciszka*, "Studia Koszalińsko-Kołołbrzeskie" (2014) 21, pp. 283–296.

25 Francis, *Catechesis: "Healing the world": 5. Solidarity and the virtue of faith* (2 September 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200902_udienza-generale.html [accessed: 01.03.2023]. Here Francis recalled the medieval didactic tale of the Tower of Babel syndrome. During the work of building it, no one dispaired at the death of slaves, but everyone complained when a single brick was wasted.

26 *Ibidem*.

27 A special expression of papal solidarity on the day the catechesis was delivered was an appeal to participate in a universal day of prayer and fasting for Lebanon on 4 September 2020. This country has been affected by the successive consequences of war and fighting. Cf. Francis, *Catechesis: "Healing the world": 5. Solidarity and the virtue of faith*. For more on solidarity in an open society cf. A. Kobyliński, *The Role of Solidarity in an Open Society*, in: P. Ivanič, M. Hetényi (eds.), *Európske kontexty interkultúrnej komunikácie*, Nitra 2009, pp. 139–148; *idem*, *Post-Communism, Liberalism and Solidarity in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe after 1989*, "Seminare" 39 (2014) 8, pp. 105–115.

28 More on this principle: S. Fel, *Dobro wspólne jako wartość i zasada etyczno-społeczna. Perspektywa katolickiej nauki społecznej*, "Zeszyty Naukowe KUL" 64 (2021) 1–2 (253–254), pp. 121–136.

perspective of social and political relations. “A virus that does not recognize barriers, borders, or cultural or political distinctions must be faced with a love without barriers, borders or distinctions.”²⁹ For this reason, the Pope recalled the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who taught that enhancing and caring for the common good is a duty of justice, and it applies to every citizen, not just Christians. This also requires that the role of politics in social life be de-mythologised, so that it is understood and practised anew as a space of prudent concern for the common good.

As a continuation of the idea of caring for the common home, Francis turned his attention to helping the needy, the marginalised and the sick. A fundamental social concern is the protection of the “common home,” i.e., Earth and every of its creatures. The abuse of ecosystems has been identified as a grave sin, for which the remedy is an attitude of contemplation, in contrast to an “unbalanced and arrogant anthropocentrism.”³⁰ Conversion is also to be concerned with the question of ecology and the understanding of the value of work, which is not exploitation but mission and concern for further growth. Contemplating beauty, in Francis’ optics, has a disinterested character and leads people to a greater sensitivity to the world. However, it cannot be reduced to looking at the world and nature “from the outside,” for it is about seeing that we are part of the created world, “making us protagonists and not mere spectators of an amorphous reality that is only to be exploited.”³¹ The fruit of such work can be wonder at the world and a caring attitude, close to fraternity, opposing the destruction of creation.³² Therefore, the postulate of the future is a “revolution of care.”³³

Francis’ next, seventh, encouragement was based on the principle of subsidiarity in the perspective of the virtue of hope.³⁴ The starting point is a correct understanding

29 Francis, *Catechesis “Healing the world”*: 6. *Love and the common good* (9 September 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200909_udienza-generale.html [accessed: 01.03.2023].

30 Cf. idem, *Catechesis “Healing the world”*: 7. *Care of the common home and contemplative dimension* (16 September 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200916_udienza-generale.html [accessed: 01.03.2023].

31 Ibidem.

32 To illustrate this point, the Pope quoted a Spanish saying: “God always forgives; we forgive sometimes; nature never forgives,” cf. Francis, *Catechesis “Healing the world”*: 7. *Care of the common home and contemplative dimension*.

33 Ibidem.

34 More on this principle, e.g.: W. Łużyński, *Elementy zasady pomocniczości w encyklice Benedykta XVI „Caritas in veritate”*, “Teologia i Człowiek” 20 (2012), pp. 69–82; J. Ostheimer, *Ład społeczny. Zasada pomocniczości i jej znaczenie dla społeczeństwa obywatelskiego*, “Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” 56 (2013) 1 (221), pp. 27–46; S. Fontana, *Zasada pomocniczości i obecność katolików w życiu publicznym*, “Społeczeństwo” (2020) 2, pp. 185–193.

of the need to share responsibility. The dangers in this matter, according to Francis, are, on the one hand, the impossibility of expressing one's faith because of persecution and, on the other, when ethical and religious views are suppressed because of political correctness. The Pope referred to the thought of his predecessor, Pius XI, who, after the economic crisis of the late 1920s, showed the need for the proper application of the principle of subsidiarity.³⁵ The need for the application of this principle was clearly revealed during the pandemic. On the one hand, "from above," public institutions had to support individuals, families and businesses to survive the time of *lockdown*. On the other hand, however, "society's leaders must respect and promote the intermediate or lower levels. In fact, the contribution of individuals, of families, of associations, of businesses, of every intermediary body, and even of the Church, is decisive."³⁶ The principle of subsidiarity is therefore expressed in discerning and then taking proper responsibility for the other and for others. Its opposite are various forms of injustice, extractive activities in different regions of the earth, failure to recognise and listen to the voices of indigenous peoples in a given territory, taking sides with corporations and financial societies, big pharmaceutical companies or others interested in making unfair money out of pandemonium. The embodiment of the principle of subsidiarity is therefore linked to the awakening of hope for the future by renewing ties and creating new structures, which is also closely linked to the principle of solidarity. "To emerge from the crisis does not mean to varnish over current situations so that they might appear more just. No. To emerge from the crisis means to change, and true change is done by everyone, all the persons that form a people."³⁷

The last, concluding catechesis, was devoted by the Pope to a general reflection on the condition of society. The renewal of society after a pandemic cannot simply be a return to a former normality that seemed sick and unjust. Francis encouraged the building of a "normality of the Kingdom of God," in which bread is available to the needy, alms are given out of the need of the heart, and tenderness leads to approaching, healing and sacrificing for fellow human beings. The Pope furthermore made a diagnosis and prognosis about the sources and ways out of the contemporary troubles of unjust development. The well-known theories in economics about the "trickle-down effect" or the "glass of water theory" have not

35 Cf. Francis, *Catechesis "Healing the world": 8. Subsidiarity and virtue of hope* (23 September 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200923_udienza-generale.html [accessed: 01.03.2023].

36 Ibidem.

37 Ibidem.

been successful in the past. The need is to build new forms of social life through the necessity of work, the embodiment of care and generosity alluding to tenderness, and the creation of a society of solidarity and justice, participatory and respectful of diversity.³⁸

3. *The Economy of Francesco* project

The papal intuitions on the Church's social teaching contained in the 2020 Wednesday catecheses found their practical continuation in 2022. At that time, Francis participated in the completion of a three-day gathering of around 1,000 young people called *The Economy of Francesco*, whose fundamental aim was to take a step towards introducing Catholic social teaching into the economic world on the basis of the encyclicals *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti*. This action was inspired by the Pope's letter of 1 May 2019 addressed to young economists and businessmen around the world. It called for a correction of current growth models of societies to the extent that greater respect for the environment, care for life and the family, striving for social equality, the dignity of workers and the rights of future generations can be guaranteed. As in the story of St Francis, so today it is necessary to rebuild a house in ruins, which is also the world of economy and sustainable development.³⁹

The youth meeting did not take place on the date indicated due to the pandemic, but an *online* consultation was carried out and the conference in Assisi finally took place on 24 September 2022, with the participation of Francis. The idea of a discussion around "twelve villages" of themes was then born, which were also spaces for group work: (1) Policies for Happiness; (2) Energy and Poverty; (3) Life and Life-styles; (4) Business and Peace; (5) W4E: Women for Economy; (6) Business in Transition; (7) Work and Care; (8) CO₂ and Inequalities; (9) Management and Gift; (10) Vocation and Profit; (11) Agriculture and Justice; (12) Finance and Humanity.⁴⁰ Villages are often numerous intersections of paths and streets, places where people representing different traditions and cultures meet. It is therefore a question of building spaces

38 Cf. Francis, *Catechesis "Healing the world": 9. Preparing the future together with Jesus who saves and heals* (30 September 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200930_udienza-generale.html [accessed: 01.03.2023].

39 Cf. Francesco, *Lettera per l'evento "Economy of Francesco" (Assisi, 26–28 marzo 2020)*, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/letters/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190501_giovani-imprenditori.html [accessed: 01.03.2023].

40 Cf. K. Pietraszewski (ed.), *Ekonomia Franciszka. Przewodnik po ekologii integralnej dla wspólnot lokalnych*, Warszawa 2021; *The Economy of Francesco* website: <https://francescoeconomy.org> [accessed: 01.03.2023].

of dialogue and new opportunities for communication, in order to better understand and incorporate into social life the principles proper to it.⁴¹

The Assisi meeting also resulted in the final document *Patto di Assisi 2022*, signed by the Pope and by the young people, which is a declaration to build an economic world based on the principles of Catholic social teaching.⁴² The Assisi project shows how important and yet possible such an integral view of man is in relation to an adequate anthropology and principles of social life.

4. Conclusions

As Luigino Bruni points out, Pope Francis' first economic and social message is contained in his name.⁴³ For poverty has many forms and also concerns the world of values, shaken by relativism and postmodernism. Coming from a reality marked by numerous economic problems, the Pope has become a visible promoter of social values in the world. The time of the pandemic revealed the need, and at the same time the necessity, for a deeper reflection on the changing reality, so that the reconstruction of the world would take place in the spirit of healing the wounds inflicted on man and all creation. This was the proposal made by Francis during the 2020 Wednesday catecheses, when he returned to seven principles of social teaching well-known in Catholic thought, in order to recall, on their basis, the dignity of the person and the essence of concern for the common good. A reference to this teaching is the project *The Economy of Francesco*, linked to the youth meeting in Assisi and an explicit call for economic, social and political structures to be networks of good connections and not just lucrative profits. Francis' appeal confirms that Catholic social thought can play an important role in a time of change of era.

Translated by Joanna Malczewska

41 Cf. A. Barattieri, *Protagonists of Radical Changes Through Inclusive Processes. Comments on the "Economy of Francesco"*, "Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali" (2021) 4, pp. 487–494; T. Gabrieli, *The (Implicit) Microeconomic Foundations of The Economy of Francesco*, "Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali" (2021) 4, pp. 471–486; G. Hale, *Economy of Francesco: From Initiative to Action*, "Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali" (2021) 4, pp. 495–500.

42 Cf. *Il documento finale*, "L'Osservatore Romano" 162 (2022) 219, pp. 3; *Dichiarazione finale di Assisi 2022*, <https://francescoeconomy.org/it/final-statement-eof-assisi-2022/> [accessed: 01.03.2023].

43 L. Bruni, *Francesco, ieri e oggi. Il primo messaggio economico del Papa è nella scelta del nome*, "Donne Chiesa Mondo. Mensile dell'Osservatore Romano" (2022) 116, pp. 18–21.

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THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING IN BUILDING A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD BASED ON THE 2020 CATECHESSES OF POPE FRANCIS. AN OUTLINE OF THE ISSUE

Summary

Successive crises of the modern world open up new fields of reflection on the moral condition of man. An important challenge at the beginning of the third millennium turned out to be the coronavirus pandemic, which causes the COVID-19 disease. The main purpose of this article is to analyse the Wednesday catecheses of Pope Francis, delivered in August and September 2020 under the collective title "Healing the world." In them, the Pope raises the issue of the topicality of Catholic social teaching and reminds us that building the world in the post-pandemic period

should primarily take into account adequate anthropology and the dignity of every human person. With reference to the traditional moral teaching, subsequent catechesis concerned the updating of the following principles: the principle of the dignity of the person, the principle of the common good, the principle of the preferential option for the poor, the principle of the universal destination of goods, the principle of solidarity, the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of care for the common home. In the papal texts, it is interesting to combine these principles with the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, which reveals even more the essence of the Christian life, expressed in the call to bring the fruits of love for the life of the world. Francis' idea of the need to refer to ethics in the assessment of public life is referred to and extended by the project *The Economy of Francesco*, related to the meeting of young people in Assisi, based on consultations in twelve "thematic villages," and illustrating specific examples how to combine faith, economics, ethics and social life. In this perspective, the social teaching of the Church, cited by Francis, seems to be still valuable and up to date in terms of a constructive proposal to renew the world.

Keywords: Francis, catechesis, Catholic social teaching, healing the world, social principles

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