

ECCLESIOLOGICAL THEMES IN THE PONTIFICATE OF POPE FRANCIS

Deepening and Actualization of the Conciliar Image of the Church

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Abstract

The article analyzes the emerging ecclesiology of Pope Francis that revives the teaching of the Vatican Council II and opens a new phase in the reception of Vatican II's vision of the Church. The introductory part briefly outlines the kerygmatic feature of Pope Francis's theology, which is in the background of his speech about the Church. The starting point of the second and central part of the article is the phrase "the Church that goes forth", which represents the hermeneutic key of the Pope's understanding of the Church. We highlight his reflections about the essence and mission of the Church, such as the missionary transformation of the Church, synodality and polycentric understanding of the Church, Church as a mother and healer, Church and the world. Finally, in the spirit of the Church that goes forth, we elaborate on a 'Samaritan Church', a Church as a 'filed hospital', characterized by charity, a commitment to the poor, a sense for the periphery and human brotherhood, promoting a culture of encounter and dialogue. The third part of the article focuses on the Pope's call to holiness and to the realization of Christian spirituality, which internally revives and encourages the missionary transformation of the Church.

Research has shown that Pope Francis aims to restore today's Church in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. The doctrinal part of his teaching about the Church comes to life in pastoral practice. Pope Francis advocates the Church as a strong moral authority in society and the world. It is a parricidal Church that decisively bears

witness, speaks freely and boldly, opens spaces for encounter and authentic dialogue, and knows how to listen and accept criticism.

Key words: missionary transformation of the Church, Church as mother and healer, Church and the world, synodal communion, charity, the poor, fraternity, spirituality

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the Catholic Church has celebrated the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council (October 11, 1962). As with any anniversary, it was an opportunity for numerous comments, articles or serious studies, rather in the foreign than in the domestic Catholic press, in which various aspects of that great ecclesial event, without which today's Catholic Church would be unthinkable, were considered. This epochal turn led to new thinking and creativity but also great polarization.¹ The Second Vatican Council set its main task to tell the world, in a new way, how the Church sees itself and understands its mission in today's world. Not diminishing the significance of the other Council documents, we primarily find the ecclesologically relevant texts of the Council in two constitutions of the Church: the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*² and the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*.³ They are the basis of a new development in Catholic ecclesiology and the Church.

¹ Regarding the objective scientific reconstruction of the entire Council event, its structure, content, intentions and meaning, we refer to two major works, one of the Italian theologian Giuseppe Alberigo, coauthored with fifty other theologians from all over the world and published in five volumes, *History of the Second Vatican Council: Storia del Concilio Vaticano II*, diretta da Giuseppe Alberigo, Società editrice il Mulino, Bologna, 1995., I-V. Another major work is *Theological Commentary on the Second Vatican Council*, published in five volumes by German theologians Peter Hünermann and Bern Jochen Hilberth: *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, I-V, Herder, Freiburg, 2004. There are many articles on the meaning and acceptance of the Second Vatican Council in the Croatian language. Here I refer to the book of Nediljko Ante Ančić, the Split ecclesialogist, on the preparation and holding of the Council, and a conciliar vision of the Church's renewal: *Teološka polazišta i orijentacije u svjetlu Drugoga vatikanskog koncila*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2021.

² Cf. Drugi vatikanski koncil, *Lumen gentium. Dogmatska konstitucija o Crkvi* (21. XI. 1964.), in: *Dokumenti*, Zagreb, Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2008. (hereinafter LG).

³ Cf. Drugi vatikanski koncil, *Gaudium et spes. Pastoralna konstitucija o Crkvi u svremenom svijetu* (7. XII. 1965.), in: (21. XI. 1964.), in: *Dokumenti*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2008. (hereinafter GS).

Sixty years after the opening of the Council, the Church can better reflect on ecclesiology, hoping to attain the Council's objectives and the import of its text, which profoundly marked and renewed its life at all levels. Efforts to define its universal mission, essential structure and relation with the modern world have been the main topics of many published books and talks. A guiding thread in all ecclesiological publications is a sincere theological effort to reveal the true face of the Church and bring it closer to our contemporaries, thus enabling its further progress in today's world. In this context, we need to observe the pontificate of Pope Francis but certainly not his entire pontificate as such research would exceed the length of this paper. Assuming the office of the Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis was undoubtedly aware of the problems in the Church, which prompted him to reform the Roman Curia and some other church services and activities. In his pontificate, he raised various issues: from the pastoral care of marriage and the family to the synodal path of the Church.

This paper analyzes Pope Francis' main ecclesiological themes, which support his fidelity to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. It also highlights those ecclesiological emphases in the papal teaching texts containing the innovative and creative potential for the renewal of the Church in today's time.

We divided the article into three parts. The introductory part briefly describes the kerygmatic feature of Pope Francis' theology, its style and method as they form the background of his speech on the 'Church which goes forth'.

The second and central part of the article provides a systematic and critical approach to the essential themes of Francis's ecclesiological thought, inspired by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. As revived, it enables a *new phase* of ecclesiology based on the Council texts. Therefore, the focal points of Pope Francis's reflection on the Church's profound nature, essential structure, its relation with the world, and the life of an individual believer in the church community, deepen and update the conciliar image of the Church.

In the third part of the article, we outline Pope's thoughts on the evangelical renewal of the Church in the light of his call for holiness in the modern world as well as the realization of Christian spirituality, which revives the inner missionary transformation of the Church.

1. THE KERYGMATIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE THEOLOGY OF POPE FRANCIS

Kerygmatic theology emerged in the 1930s, aiming to connect theology and preaching that were separated. Cardinal Walter Kasper claims that kerygmatic theology inspires and determines Pope Francis's thoughts.⁴ Thus, Pope Francis is an announcer, a preacher, and more a shepherd than an academic theologian. He is not a theologian of the type of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, nor like John Paul II, who focused on philosophical-theological writings, specifically anthropology. Francis is not even like Paul VI, the Pope of the Second Vatican Council, an aristocrat of spirit, who discussed and wrote with linguistic subtlety about evangelization and the challenge of the contemporary Church - the relationship between religion and culture.

Pope Francis is a theologian similar to Pope John XXIII, who called himself the 'pastor of the world' as in the spirit of a shepherd, he wants to meet people, humanity, and the whole world and lead his Church in it. They both follow the same principle: instead of anathema and a Manichean view of man and the world, church pastors are called to announce and give God's goodness; instead of fleeing, defending and closing from the world, the Church and priests should go among people, all the way to the outskirts of the world; instead of focusing on sin and condemnation, they should focus on Jesus' patient acceptance, forgiveness and mercy; instead of hypersensitivity to dogma and scrupulousness towards the truths of faith, they should choose sensitivity and contrition for one's inconsistency, duplicity and a constant path of conversion. Pope Francis cares about returning the Church to its fundamental inspirations and connecting it with real life.

The theology of Pope Francis is a kerygmatic - the joyful announcement - witness theology.⁵ The Pope grew out of a theology inspired by the practice of Latin American peoples (folk culture, folk pastoral care and piety), a separate, Argentinian school of the

⁴ Walter Kasper, *Papa Franjo – revolucija nježnosti i ljubavi. Teološki korijeni i pastoralne perspektive*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2015., 20.

⁵ Describing the historical origin of theology, theologian Max Seckler points out that preaching is the source of theology. As he claims: "Theology is a *form of the preaching* of the word of God that uses narratives, prayers, poetic expressions so that people can learn about God's great works and his plan of salvation. (*predicatio est initium, fundamentum et radix omnis theologiae*)." Cf. M. Seckler, *Theologiein. Un' idea fondamentale in una triplice configurazione*, in: *Ibid, Teologia, Scienza, Chiesa. Saggi di teologia fondamentale*, Morcelliana, Brescia, 1998., 13-14.

theology of the people (Juan Luis Segundo), the theology of the people's pastoral care (Juan Carlos Scannone).⁶ The style of preaching and the understanding of God's word as the guiding criterion (*norma normans*) for everyone, both bishops and believers, is the theology of the people - the specific theology in Argentina that inspired Pope Francis and motivated him to consolidate and improve the communal form of the Church. That is why his theology is biblical, and biblically imbued. He tirelessly preaches and catechizes using Gospel texts. The Bible, more precisely the Gospels, are the primary source of all his speeches, exhortations, and encyclicals. He often takes whole passages from the Holy Scriptures, and all his addresses convey God's word (*Amoris Laetitia*⁷ - St. Paul's Hymn of Love, *Fratelli Tutti*⁸ - Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan). His biblical theology corresponds to liturgical time, current events and pastoral occasions. The Pope's approach to understanding and interpreting the Holy Scriptures is kerygmatic, and a constant and fundamental message he speaks of and writes about is the *kerygma*. Kerygma is a vital, saving message that does not leave the individual and the nation aside but calls for conversion.

The talk about the kerygma recalls the very beginnings of faith and its first proclamation. The word 'kerygma' comes from the verb *kerysso*, which means to *proclaim*, i.e. the kerygma would be a loud and public proclamation of the fundamental Gospel message. Kerygma is a message of salvation that calls for an immediate response, for conversion, as the prophets and apostles did. As for its content, the kerygma is the core message of the Christian faith, preaching and action. We find examples of short kerygma formulations, especially in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. Acts 2:3; 5:10; 13), in which there is an ardent desire to spread the good news of salvation in Christ everywhere. The trinitarian aspect of kerygma means that the Spirit leads us to believe in "Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection reveals God's infinite mercy to us".⁹ Bearing all this in mind, we can understand why the Pope's speech some-

⁶ See in: Carlos Maria Galli, *Il ritorno del popolo di Dio. Ecclesiologia argentina e riforma della Chiesa*, in: *Il Regno - Attualità*, 5 (2015.), 294-300.

⁷ Papa Franjo, *Amoris laetitia. Radost ljubavi. Posinodalna apostolska pobudnica biskupima, prezbiterima i đakonima, posvećenim osobama, kršćanskim supruzima i svim vjericima laicima o ljubavi u obitelji*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2016. (hereinafter AL).

⁸ Papa Franjo, *Fratelli tutti. Enciklika o bratstvu i socijalnom prijateljstvu*, Zagreb, Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2021. (hereinafter FT)

⁹ Papa Franjo, *Evangelii gaudium. Radost evanđelja. Apostolska pobudnica o naviještanju evanđelja u današnjem svijetu* (24. XI. 2013.), Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2013., 5 (hereinafter EG).

times contains ambiguities, linguistic imperfections, semantic confusion and even linguistic exaggerations. Carried away by the life messages of the Gospel, he often speaks up spontaneously. So, his speech seems inexplicit, inarticulate, or terminologically imprecise but experientially convincing, sincere and truthful.”¹⁰ Pope Francis is actually renewing the church’s language. It is a matter of a new linguistic event in the Church.¹¹ He uses simple language that some repudiate precisely because it resembles the Gospel language, the way Jesus spoke, not because it is incomprehensible, but because it is difficult, demanding, because it positively evokes and provokes, because it is performative. In his communication shift, Pope Francis often and gladly refers to simple New Testament images to describe his vision of the Church.

To better understand the relationship between theology and the *kerygma*, we need to quote Pope Francis’ words from his first Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*: “The centrality of the *kerygma* calls for stressing those elements which are most needed today: it has to express God’s saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical. All this demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental.” (EG 165). It is evident from the quote that the *kerygma* is at the centre of Bergoglio’s theology, his experiential truth and his testimony of God’s mercy. The basic content of the *kerygma* is mercy, “the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person [...] Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.”¹²

¹⁰ On kerygmatic theology see: Ivan Šarčević, Mjesto i uloga teologije u Crkvi i društvu u svjetlu konstitucije *Veritatis gaudium*, in: S. Bongiovanni – S. Tanzarella (ur.), *Sa svim brodolomima povijesti, Teologija nakon Veritatis gaudium u kontekstu Mediterana*, Dubrovačka biskupija, Dubrovnik, 2021., 353-358, here: 355.

¹¹ See: Diego Fares, *Amoris laetitia* e il rinnovamento del linguaggio ecclesiale, u: Francesco, *Amoris laetitia. Esortazione apostolica sull’amore nella famiglia*. Testo integrale de «La Civiltà Cattolica, Ancora, Milano, 2016., 227-241.

¹² Papa Franjo, *Misericordia vultus- Lice milosrda. Bula najave Izvanrednoga jubileja milosrda* (11.IV. 2015.), Zagreb, Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2015., br. 2. (hereinafter MV).

Regarding the application of the kerygma to catechesis, Pope Francis asserts in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “In catechesis too, we have rediscovered the fundamental role of the first announcement or kerygma, which needs to be the centre of all evangelizing activity and all efforts at Church renewal. (...) This first proclamation is called ‘first’ not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the *principal* proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment.” (EG 164).

Pope Francis, therefore, insists that the kerygma needs to be the center of all theological thinking and Christian action. In the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium - The Joy of Truth* on ecclesiastical universities and faculties, citing *Evangelii Gaudium*, it is said that for theology and for the renewal of church studies, the first and enduring criterion is the ‘introduction to the heart of kerygma’¹³, so every theologian should be kerygmatic preacher and an evangelizer. The kerygma is a concise message, an existential appeal, a personal experiential truth that God has touched me and that a personal relationship with God is my fundamental relationship that *concerns me unconditionally* and on which I build my personality.

2. THE CHURCH WHICH GOES FORTH

The first apostolic exhortation *Evangelium Gaudium - Joy of the Gospel*, on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world, represents the program of the pontificate of Pope Francis, marked with the phrase ‘the Church which goes forth’ (cf. EG 20, 23-24, 49). This biblical motif of ‘exit’ is central to the Pope’s understanding of the Church and represents a kind of hermeneutic key to all of Francis’ teaching and efforts.

From the very beginning, the Pope’s exhortation clearly states that this programmatic proposal intends to “point out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come” (EG 1). As with any text, we can interpret the exhortation in different ways. However, we consider the statement, at the end of the introduction, crucial for its understanding: “Here I have chosen to present some guidelines

¹³ Cf. Papa Franjo, *Veritatis gaudium – Radost istine. Apostolska konstitucija o crkvenim sveučilištima i fakultetima*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2018., 4a, (hereinafter VG). Cf. also: EG 11; 34ss; 164-165.

which can encourage and guide the whole Church in a new phase of evangelization, one marked by enthusiasm and vitality. In this context, and on the basis of the teaching of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, I have decided, among other themes, to discuss at length the following questions..." (EG 17).¹⁴ Hence, the Pope's proposal of the 'Church which goes forth' relies on the dogmatic constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, which connects the proclamation of the Gospel, and the renewal of the Church from a missionary point of view.

Therefore, in the five chapters of the exhortation, we find the following focal points: the first chapter indicates the necessity of the *missionary transformation of the Church*, inspired by the Council that presented 'ecclesial conversion as openness to a constant self-renewal born of fidelity to Jesus Christ' (EG 26).¹⁵ In the second chapter, the Pope explain an *evangelical discernment* (cf. EG 50) and calls the community of believers to always have 'ever watchful scrutiny of the signs of the times'.¹⁶

In the third and fourth chapters, the Pope calls for the proclamation of the Gospel of mercy, emphasizing its *social dimension*. The two challenging issues he considers fundamental and integral parts of the Church's mission at this time in history are social inclusion of the poor (cf. EG 186-237) and social dialogue as a contribution to peace (cf. EG 238-258). Although its content is in the tradition of great social encyclicals, the Pope's missionary exhortation shows different nuances. Finally, the fifth chapter outlines the *missionary spirituality* that should support the Church which goes forth and evangelizes.

¹⁴ German theologian Georg Augustin claims that the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 'can rank among the constitution *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* from the Second Vatican Council and the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Paul VI from 1975.' Cf. George Augustin, *S papom Franjom u Crkvi koja izlazi. Ohrabrenja iz apostolske pobudnice Radost evanđelja*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2022., 8, note 1.

¹⁵ In the text, Pope Francis explicitly refers to the encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam* br. 10 and the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, No. 6.

¹⁶ "This is in fact a grave responsibility, since certain present realities, unless effectively dealt with, are capable of setting off processes of dehumanization which would then be hard to reverse." (EG 51). The Second Vatican Council calls for the duty of scrutinizing and interpreting the signs of the times: GS 4, 11, 44; UR 4; DH 15. See: Nediljko Ante Ančić, Tumačenje znakova vremena – zaboravljena zadaća Crkve?, in: *Crkva u svijetu* 42 (2007.), 2, 200-227.

Referring to the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* and other relevant documents on the papal teaching¹⁷ on the vision of the Church, we continue highlighting *certain tendencies* in his thinking about the essence and mission of the Church¹⁸. However, the doctrinal part of the teachings about the Church with Pope Francis *revives* in the pastoral application.

2.1. The new missionary zeal of the Church

Unlike Pope Benedict XVI, who focused on the inner structure of the Church's teaching developed at the Council and the struggle between two conflicting forms of interpretation such as 'the hermeneutics of discontinuity or rupture' and 'the hermeneutics of reform and renewal', preserving continuity in the innovative and lively sense of the word¹⁹, Pope Francis did not take part in the Council, but he was raised and educated in its spirit, hence preserving its continuity in the innovative and lively way. He can approach the Council's document more freely and directly because he is not preoccupied with the academic and theoretical aspects of the 'retrospective or balance of the Council'. He relies on his own life experiences and social circumstances in South America and finds *new inspirations* for the Church of his time in the Council documents. Speaking about essential topics for the Church's life and the future of the whole world, Pope Francis reveals his ecclesiological perspective rooted in the Council documents.²⁰

¹⁷ These are: apostolic exhortations *Amoris Laetitia - Joy of Love* (2017.), *Gaudete et Exsultate - Rejoice and Be Glad!* (2019.), *Christus Vivit - Christ Lives* (2019.), and *Querida Amazonia - Beloved Amazonia* (2020.), and the papal bull announcing Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy *Misericordiae Vultus - The Face of Mercy* (2015.), as well as the encyclicals *Laudato Si* (2015.) and *Fratelli Tutti* (2021.). The numerous footnotes in the papal teaching texts testify that Pope Francis often refers to his predecessors in the chair of Peter or papal documents of the Vatican congregations. Also, he often refers to the statements of episcopal conferences, individual saints, and secular authors.

¹⁸ A relevant article about Francis's view of the Church: Antun Tamarut, Crkva u nauku pape Franje, in: *Bogoslovska smotra* 87 (2017.), 1, 59-78.

¹⁹ Pope Benedict XVI's speech to cardinals and employees of the Roman Curia on the 40th anniversary of the Council (22. 12. 2005.). Cf. Benedikt XVI., Discorso alla Curia Romana in occasione della presentazione degli auguri natalizi (22 dicembre 2005.), *L'Osservatore Romano* 23 dicembre 2005., 5-6.

²⁰ A few months after his election as the Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis expressed himself this way about the Council: "Vatican II. was a re-reading of the Gospel in light of contemporary culture. It produced a renewal movement that simply comes from the same Gospel. Its fruits are enormous. (...) Yes, there is the hermeneutics of continuity and discontinuity. (...) One thing is clear: the

Pope Francis comes to a global scene when the ardour of triumphalism over communism subsides, and the world finds itself in new turmoil. It is the time of global financial and environmental crises, migrant crises, the revival of religions and their abuse, holy states and holy terrors responsible for destruction and mass murder in the name of God. The Pope is also concerned for the morally weak capitalist and consumerist West and those local Churches that became privileged because of their relationship with politics. Due to it, they made themselves institutions of social power, not the 'sacrament' of God's kingdom, the means and sign of God's love for all humanity. Like Pope John XXIII, he shares closeness with the people and openness to the world. He often refers to Paul VI and his encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975.) regarding evangelization, especially in its programmatic document, the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013.). Like Pope John Paul II, he advocates for the confession of sins of members of the Catholic Church (*mea culpa*) in the world and the experience of God's/Father's mercy.

We should understand the Pope's call for the missionary transformation of the Church in this light. The Council points out that the Church is not for its own sake but the sacrament of salvation for the whole world. It is a 'messianic people' and missionary and evangelizing community. "The missionary outreach is the *paradigmatic for all the Church activity*" (EG 15). Vatican II's Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes* best expresses the missionary consciousness. *Lumen Gentium* clarifies the main ecclesiological points from a missionary perspective, abandoning the increasingly widespread geographical understanding of missions in favour of its cultural and relational dimensions. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI places the need for missions and evangelization at the centre of post-conciliar efforts. Although there are linking points between the two popes on this issue, one cannot help but see the differences between the two texts that arise from the changed circumstances in which we live today, but also from the theological perception of the two popes.

The new missionary zeal requires the *transformation* of the Church, which calls to mind the conciliar principle of 'continuous reform'.²¹ In the context of a new phase of evangelization, the

dynamic of reading the Gospel, actualizing its message for today— typical of Vatican II—is absolutely irreversible." Antonio Spadaro, *Das Interview mit dem Papst Franziskus*, Herder, Freiburg, 2013., 57.

²¹ We refer to statements from two key documents: "The Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified,

exhortation points out the risk church institutions face, the desire for 'self-preservation'. Therefore, the Church has to constantly *go forth* from itself, from being shut up within its structures, which give it a false sense of security (cf. EG 49), self-centered mentality and spirituality (cf. EG 2), narrowness and self-absorption (cf. EG 8). All ecclesial structures, including the papacy, must review their current way of acting 'in the missionary key' (cf. EG 27-33), avoiding excessive centralization that can complicate the life of the Church and its missionary outreach (cf. EG 32). In all of this, one should not ignore the pluralistic context in which many Christians live, where the understanding of 'tolerance' prevails at the level of public opinion, which often equates ardent Christian faith and missions with proselytism. Because of this, Christians challenge the danger of relativizing their beliefs or the temptation to turn into religious fundamentalists and militant believers in society.

So, for the Pope, the image of the missionary Church is the starting point of his ecclesiological thought. Evangelization is the task of the Church and the entire people of God (cf. EG 111). "The Church that goes forth is a community of missionary disciples who take the the first step" (cf. EG 24; 119-121), giving decisive importance to the sense of the faithful (*sensus fidelium*) and the pneumatic nature of the Church.²²

2.2. The Church as a community of God's people

The third chapter of *Evangelii Gaudium* clearly emphasizes that the entire people of God is the subject and bearer of the proclamation of the Gospel. Further on, we explain how Pope Francis, in his teaching and actions, actualizes the concept of God's people, which marked a change of consciousness in the understanding of the Church at the Second Vatican Council.

At the centre of Pope Francis' understanding of the Church is the image of the Church as God's people (cf. EG 111-134). Walter Kasper notes that "it is not a new, but a renewed view of the Church that should lead to its new lifestyle."²³ This image is rooted in *biblia*

always follows the way of penance and renewal. (LG 8); Christ summons the Church to *continual reformation* as she sojourns here on earth. The Church is always in need of this, in so far as she is an institution of men here on earth." (UR 6)

²² For this aspect of Pope's ecclesiology, see: Branko Murić, *Narod Božji kao nositelj navješćaja Crkve. Evangelii gaudium i misionarska preobrazba Crkve*, in: *Diaconvensia* 22 (2014.), 4, 469-495.

²³ Walter Kasper, *Papa Franjo – revolucija nježnosti*, 58-72, here 59.

cal, patristic, and liturgical traditions. The Second Vatican Council renewed this understanding and presented the Church as the messianic people of God (cf. LG no. 9-12, 14, 48, 49, 50). The Council expressed this new ecclesiological awareness. It starts from contemplating the mystery of the Church and its Trinitarian roots to its eschatological fulfilment. Two words that connect the first two chapters of *Lumen Gentium* are 'mystery' and 'people'. These words determine the logic of the Council's teaching about the Church. For the Pope, the people of God are "a mystery rooted in the Trinity, yet she exists concretely in history as a people of pilgrims and evangelizers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary" (EG 111).

Argentinian theologian Carlos Maria Galli claims that with Pope Francis, the theology of the People of God regained its centrality, given by the Second Vatican Council, which in many post-conciliar teaching documents began to fade. God's people are the socio-historical fulfilment of the mystery of the Church and agents of evangelization.²⁴ The Argentinian theologian asserts Pope Francis actually "takes over, enriches and generalizes the Argentine theology of the people of God",²⁵ which understands the *world* the Council discusses through the reality of the *people* and their *culture*. "It is a theology that contemplates the people as a collective historical subject and as a hermeneutic key for reading the signs of the times. God's people are those, who journey together with peoples in history, so this theology focuses on the relationship between God's people and the cultures of individual peoples."²⁶

The dogmatic constitution of the Church *Lumen Gentium* does not refer to the Church as *God's people* in an ethnic and political sense but in the biblical-theological sense of the *ordinary and messianic people* (cf. LG 9). However, Catholic theology and practice do not adequately consider this fact. It is similar in other churches,

²⁴ In an interview with A. Spadaro for the *Civiltà Cattolica* magazine, he points out that belonging to the people has a strong theological value: "Belonging to a people has a strong theological value. In the history of salvation, God has saved a people. There is no full identity without belonging to a people. (...) The people itself constitutes a subject. And the church is the people of God on the journey through history, with joys and sorrows. Cf. Antonio Spadaro, *Intervista a Papa Francesco*, u: *Civiltà Cattolica*, 3918 (2013.), 459.

²⁵ Cf. Carlos Maria Galli, *Il ritorno del popolo di Dio. Ecclesiologia argentina e riforma della Chiesa*, in: *Il Regno - Attualità*, 5 (2015.), pp. 294-300., here: 297. See: Antun Tamarut, *Crkva u nauku pape Franje*, 64-68.

²⁶ Antun Tamarut, *Crkva u nauku pape Franje*, 68. Vidjeti također: Juan Carlos Scannone, *La teologia del popolo. Radici teologici di papa Francesco*, Morcelliana, Brescia, 2019.

Protestant and particularly Orthodox and their frequent equating of autocephaly with ethnophiletism. Pope Bergoglio is a theologian of people, better said, the ordinary people, not understood as the political category of *demos* and *ethnos*, *citizenship*, and *nation*, but as the *people of God*, as a corporate personality submissive directly to God's authority for its collective actions.²⁷ In this way, the Church is freed from potential perception as an exclusively earthly organization, as a people in the ethnic and political sense and factual historicity. Moreover, according to the Council, the Church is the universal, inclusive, and mystical-eschatological reality. Also, the Council refers to the Church as a *complex reality* (*realitas complexa*) and a pilgrim people of God, a community (*communio*) gathered in the name of Christ, a temple of God, the mystical body of Christ, a sacrament - a sign and means of God's salvation for the whole world.

However, according to the fundamental truth of faith and God's Incarnation in Jesus of Nazareth, Christianity is possible only according to the *principle of the incarnation*. The Church is like a pilgrim people of God, "incarnated in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture." (EG 115). The doctrine of the incarnation is vital to Christianity as it confirms the fundamental truth of faith about God's coming to earth and taking as his own all that is concretely human and earthly. It means respecting the linguistic, cultural and customary peculiarities of individual, local Churches and church communities. History shows how Christianity, formed following the logic of the incarnation of the Son of God, takes on multiple cultural faces. Pope Francis claims, "we would not do justice to the logic of the incarnation if we thought of Christianity as monocultural and monotonous" (EG 117).

Therefore, the Christian faith, and thus the Church, exists and develops only as a community embodied in a certain geographical context, space and time, specific people, culture, and language. "To be a Christian means to know that we are part of one people, a people that reflect themselves through different nations and cultures yet transcend all boundaries of race and language. [...] The Church is a people with varied faces and expresses this truth in countless different ways, following every culture. [...] At the same time, the people of God and the mission of Jesus transcend all cultural and geographical boundaries".²⁸ Thus, Pope Francis call us to redis-

²⁷ Cf. Ivan Šarčević, Narod Božji ili narod carev?, in: *Bosna franciscana* 56 (2022.), 9-10.

²⁸ Papa Franjo, *Odvažimo se sanjati. Put prema boljoj budućnosti*. Pope Francis in conversation with Austen Ivereigh, VBZ, Zagreb, 2020., 106.

cover *Catholicism* and to act from the fullness of that Catholicism. If, on the other hand, the Church identifies itself exclusively with one specific people or with one culture, this would compromise the *universality of the Church*. “In the diversity of peoples who experience the gift of God, each according to its own culture, the Church expresses her genuine catholicity and shows forth the beauty of her varied face.” (cf. EG 116).

The theology of the people of Pope Francis integrates the ecclesiastical and civil understanding of the people. Theologian Ivan Šarčević refers to the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* that emphasizes the importance of the local context, each people and culture, and regions within each country as not absolute particularities. It also stresses the need to respect life and the inviolable dignity of each person, including foreigners and migrants.²⁹ “Each country also belongs to the foreigner”, which flows from the fundamental dignity of every human being (cf. FT 124). “If every human being possesses an inalienable dignity, if all people are my brothers and sisters, and if the world truly belongs to everyone, then it matters little whether my neighbour was born in my country or elsewhere. My own country also shares responsibility for his or her development [...]” (FT 125). Theologian Šarčević claims that “contrary to the populist and nationalist understanding of the concept of ‘people’, which propagates closure and exclusion of others (cf. FT 160), as well as the liberal, individualistic understanding of the people as a group of individuals joined by bare interest, pope Francis argues that the people is not a logical, neither mystical category nor an ‘angelic’ reality but a mythical category.”³⁰ Also, the Pope points out that “neither the notion of ‘people’ nor that of ‘neighbour’ can be considered purely abstract or romantic, in such a way that social organization, science and civic institutions can be rejected or treated with contempt” (FT 163). Private life and true charity cannot exist unless they are safeguarded by law, legal order, systematic and institutional organization (cf. FT 164-165).

2.2.1. Synodality and polycentric understanding of the Church

Synodality and the polycentric understanding of the Church is what today’s Pope constantly outlines. Our model is not the sphere,

²⁹ Ivan Šarčević, *Narod Božji ili narod carev?*, in: *Bosna franciscana* 56 (2022.), 15-16.

³⁰ Ivan Šarčević, *Ibid*, 16.

which is no greater than its parts, “where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness.” (EG 236). Already the Second Vatican Council, whose consistent interpreter and follower is Pope Francis, emphasized the local character of the Church in addition to universality as a Catholic property. The Pope emphasizes the importance of each culture, peripheries, and small local Churches, as we can see in his efforts to elect cardinals, recent appointments in the Roman Curia and synod representatives. The Church is called to experience Catholicism, which characterizes it as the leaven of unity in diversity and unity in freedom. Such Catholicism requires and encourages “polarity in the tension between the individual and the general, between the singular and the plural, between the simple and the complex. The annulment of that tension is against the life of the Spirit.”³¹ It is about the ecclesiology of communion (*communio*) and that of the ordinary, local, family and parish unity of God’s people who make pilgrimages.

The Magisterium of the Church particularly emphasized the importance of synodality in the post-conciliar period. The synodal principle is one of the fundamental expressions of church unity. This *synodal character* of the Church is essential to Pope Francis since he repeatedly calls for it in his various addresses. As it is known, the word ‘Synod’ is ‘journeying together’ coming from two Greek words (*syn-hodos*) that mean ‘with (someone) and road’. Achieving synodality in the Church by convening synods is one of the most important efforts of Pope Francis’s pontificate. He makes it clear that he wants to revive synodality, which he understands as the path God intended for the Church of the third millennium.³²

³¹ *Videomessaggio al Congresso Internazionale di Teologia presso la Pontificia Università Cattolica Argentina “Santa Maria de los Buenos Aires”, 1-3 September 2015.* Some authors emphasize that Adam Möhler’s work, *Die Einheit in der Kirche* (1825., influenced the thinking of Pope. It views the Church as a *coincidentia oppositorum* (synthesis of opposites), “creating a space within which opposites would not necessarily lead to insurmountable divisions, but to a unity which, like a living organism, is always realized precisely due to differences and opposites”. Besides, his fundamental theological view on the synthesis of opposites followed Geston Fessard’s work *La dialectique des ‘Excercices spirituels’* (1956). Cf. Željko Tanjić, Enciklika Fratelli tutti u kontekstu učenja pape Franje, in: Stjepan Baloban-Dubravka Petrović Štefanec (ur.), *Fratelli tutti*, 52-53. Also, see: Massimo Borghesi, *Jorge Maria Bergoglio. Intelektualna biografija*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2019., 38.

³² Valuable analysis of Pope Francis’s contribution to the development of a synodal Church: Nediljko A. Ančić, Prema sinodalnoj Crkvi, in: *Bogoslovska smotra* 86

The aim is to achieve 'a sound decentralization' by strengthening the synodal character of the Church (cf. EG 16). The call for greater synodality and subsidiarity includes the organization of church institutions, readiness for dialogue, exchange of experience, constructive criticism and taking responsibility for its life and mission.³³

The principle of synodality makes the 'cornerstone' of Pope Francis' reform program, which calls all God's people to take part and overcome the contemporary Church crisis.³⁴ He tries to encourage responsibility of all its members for the Church and its mission in the world, and, if not to remove immediately, then at least to reduce the oldest 'church schism', the one between clerics and lay people. The Church, in principle, is a *community of equals*. Such equality excludes egalitarianism, which equals the diversity of gifts and services. It also rejects the *paternalistic model* of relationships and authority that hampers the active involvement of the faithful in Church life. The conciliar understanding of the Church considers the salvation community as God's people made up of all the baptized, who are part of the common priesthood of the faithful and the foundation of the Christian mission (cf. LG 10-13). In this sense, Pope Francis introduced the term 'missionary disciples', which denotes all the baptized members of the Church having equal dignity in their missionary call (cf. EG 120). This fundamental equality in the Church should not remain a mere attitude of the Church without positive outcomes. It should be preserved and protected through established Church institutions, organized in such a way as to provide testimony to the fundamental equality of its members. The three keywords that determine the synodal path of the universal Church are communion (*communio*), participation (*participation*) and mission (*mission*).³⁵

(2016.), 2, 267-271.; Željko Tanjić – Branko Murić, The principle of synodality as a paradigm of the Church of the third millennium, in: *Bogoslovska smotra* 86 (2016.), 2, 275-295.

³³ Two episcopal synods dedicated to the family, one extraordinary on '*Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization*' (2014.) and the other regular one on '*The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and the Contemporary World*' (2015.), were an opportunity for a synodal walk, listening, dialogue, debates and searching for solutions around controversial issues. The same applies to the '*Synod on Young People*' (2018.), the Pope speaks about in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit - Christ Lives* (cf. 39-42; 203-208.)

³⁴ Cf. Željko Tanjić – Branko Murić, Načelo sinodalnosti kao paradigma Crkve trećeg tisućljeća, 290-292.

³⁵ On the various aspects of the Church's renewal that Pope Francis initiated in his pontificate see: Antonio Spadaro – Carlos María Galli (ur.), *La riforma e le riforme*

By launching the synodal process at the level of the universal Church, the Pope intends to reach the greatest possible consensus on the challenges facing the Catholic Church today. For the synodal process, this primarily means that the local Church should consult everyone, i. e. *Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari debet* - what touches all should be considered and approved by all. The Second Vatican Council adopted the *idea of collegiality* apparently not only at the diocesan level but also at the level of the entire Church. The 'spirit of collegiality' should foster pastoral and spiritual cooperation between all members of the Church. In this sense, the Council refers to the beginning of the Church (cf. Acts 15:4-35), which is also very instructive for the contemporary Church. It symbolizes everything *worth discussing*, in mutual respect, as the apostles Peter and Paul, to preserve sound doctrine, sound preaching, not only as a mere set of truths but a doctrine that frees believers, new believers (Gentiles) for Jesus. The Church needs not declarative dialogue but a real one. Such dialogue as a condition of a responsible conscience should aim for "the instruction of Christian communities for the *vigilance of kairos* the Council expressed by calling us to read the signs of the times, which requires sensitivity to the demand of the moment."³⁶

2.3. Church as a mother and healer

Led by a conciliar spirit, apart from the Church as pilgrim people of God, synodal and polycentric, the Pope takes a step forward in making it a home for all the needy. The ecclesiology of the Council's pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes*, outlines its image, characterised by a diversity of dialogue. The Church that *serves* man and the world has an attitude of openness, universal fraternity and social friendship, especially for those on the social and existential peripheries, because the Catholic Church which *goes forth* is like a 'field hospital' (cf. AL 291).

In the spirit of the Council, Pope Francis speaks of it as a family home, 'a house with open doors', and 'a mother with an open heart'

nella Chiesa, Morcelliana, Brescia, 2016. On the reform of the Vatican Curia and some aspects of the Church's reform according to *Evangelii Gaudium*, see : Ivan Macut, Proročka dimenzija pape Franje ad intra, in: *Bogoslovska smotra*, 89 (2019.), 3, 651-674. See also: Ibid, *Ogledi o teologiji pape Franje. Izabrana pitanja*, Služba Božja, Split, 2022.

³⁶ Zorica Maros, Željko Mardešić i Drugi vatikanski koncil o dijalogu, in: Ivan Macut – Ivan Šarčević – Božo Vuleta (ur.), *Novi dijalog – novi sugovornici. O dijalogu u društvu i Crkvi na tragu Željka Mardešića*, Crkva u svijetu, Split, 2020., 15.

(EG 46, 48; FT 276). He compares the Catholic Church to a field hospital after the battle, where the wounded are first to be treated, and helped to heal.³⁷ He wants the Church to be a travelling brotherhood and sisterhood, solidary with the deprived, starting from family, marital, ecclesial, social and existential peripheries. In this sense, the Church is 'a mother and healer' to all, close to the suffering and the downtrodden. Therefore, it should go beyond its borders and help those who are physically, mentally, socially and spiritually wounded. Vulnerability is an essential theme of the Christian faith. Christianity teaches us about the Incarnation, which shows that God has made himself vulnerable in Jesus Christ. Vulnerability reached its peak on Christ's cross. In the light of the mystery of the Incarnation and the understanding of love as *agape*, Christians see an opportunity to serve wounded humanity. Pope Francis asserts that "God impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond. He takes us to where humanity is most wounded, where men and women, beneath the appearance of a shallow conformity, continue to seek an answer to the question about the meaning of life."³⁸

Pope Francis reflects on the "maternal face of the Church, the face of mom"³⁹. "She does not wait for the wounded to knock on her door, but looks for them on the street, collects them, hugs them, takes care of them, and makes them feel loved."⁴⁰ The Church is the 'mother with an open heart', the mediator of God's grace, not a toll-house but 'the house of father' open for everyone, not a 'controller' of God's goodness and mercy (cf. EG 47). The Church does not indocctrinate the Gospel message, does not use God's word to condemn the weak and sinful, and does not throw stones at her children, but offers them understanding, comfort and acceptance like a mother (cf. AL 49). The image of the Church as a mother and healer encompasses the great themes of Francis' ecclesiological thought, primarily *mercy, commitment to the poor and compassion for the periphery*.

Pope Francis is not European Pope but comes from the 'periphery', so he understands the Church's mission to go forth to the peripheries and learn from those who are a minority and on the

³⁷ Papa Franjo, *Božje je ime Milosrde*. Razgovor s Andreom Tornellijem, Verbum, Split, 2016., 24.

³⁸ Papa Franjo, *Gaudete et Exultate – Rejoice and Be Glad*. Apostolic exhortation on the call to holiness in today's world (March 19, 2018.), Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2018., br. 135.

³⁹ Papa Franjo, *Božje je ime Milosrde*, 22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

fringes of the world. The Church should “go forth from its comfort zone in order to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel” (EG 20). That is why he talks about God, starting from the existential peripheries and visiting poor Churches and minority Churches in complex societies. The Pope does not engage in ideological wars but directs his look to the conditions in which the world, especially the poor world, lives. Therefore, the Church is not built in the mentality of ‘elitist culture’⁴¹, neither intellectually nor spiritually. The Church of Christ should not be a homogenous Catholic culture against the modern world, a strong fortress, a closed institution, protected from enemies and wounds but as the Church with open doors, a hospitable community and a ‘field hospital’ that heals the wounds of humanity in the middle of the battlefield of neoliberal capitalism.⁴² “I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures” (EG 49), the Pope repeats in different ways what he told priests and believers when he was the archbishop of Buenos Aires, and it is to go forth to meet the world but before all the poor so that they do not remain shut up within structures that give them a false sense of security.

2.3.1. Mercy as a church form

The image of the Church as a merciful mother is central to the Pope’s pontificate and best represented by the *keyword* ‘mercy’.⁴³ At the centre of the Gospel is the message of mercy, so the Church should be a sacrament, a sign, and an instrument of God’s mercy. The conciliar theme of mercy that flourished in the pontificate of Pope John Paul II now becomes a fundamental theme in the pontificate of Pope Francis.

Following the pastoral guidance and spirituality of the Council, the Pope refers to the speeches of the two Popes of Vatican II. In the bull *Misericordiae Vultus - The Face of Mercy*, he recalled the words of Pope John XXIII at the solemn opening of the Council: “Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity (...) The Catholic Church wants

⁴¹ Cf. Papa Franjo, *Ođvažimo se sanjati. Put prema boljoj budućnosti*, 103-104.

⁴² Cf. Rainer Bucher, *Christentum im Kapitalismus. Wider die gewinnorientierte Verwaltung der Welt*, Echter, Würzburg, 2019., 129-136.

⁴³ Cf. Walter Kasper, *Papa Franjo – revolucija nježnosti i ljubavi*, 49-57.

to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children” (MV 4). The Pope also quoted Pope Paul VI, who spoke in a similar vein at the closing of the Council: “We prefer to point out how the charity has been the principal religious feature of this Council (...) the old story of the Good Samaritan has been the model of the spirituality of the Council.”(MV 4).

The mercy of God is “the beating heart of the Gospel” (MV 12), “the very foundation of the Church’s life” (MV 10). The Church makes herself a servant of the love of God and mediates that love to all people. Pastoral care “is nothing more than practicing the motherhood of the Church’. We need the Church ‘that is capable of rediscovering a merciful lap of mother’.⁴⁴ All her pastoral activity should be “caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy.” (MV 10). She must pattern her behaviour after the Son of God, “who went out to everyone without exception” (MV 12).

It does not suggest that a mercy theme was absent from Christian life in the past since mercy is the central theme of the Gospels (especially the Gospel of Luke). The theme of mercy is deeply rooted in the Old Testament and repeatedly mentioned by many church fathers. Christian piety has preserved it up to the present.⁴⁵ Pope Francis considers mercy as the ‘renewing force’ of the Christian experience of faith. Mercy is the ‘Church’s way of life’, i.e. all its beliefs and laws, actions and sensibility, which encourage us to live and witness the Gospel authentically.⁴⁶ Thus, “wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy” (MV 12). The Pope asserts that mercy is the “fullness of justice and the most radiant manifestation of God’s truth” (AL 311). It is the ultimate goal, and our mission is to announce it in our deeds and words.

⁴⁴ Cf. Walter Kasper, *Papa Franjo – revolucija nježnosti i ljubavi*, 60.

⁴⁵ See: Walter Kasper, *Milosrđe. Temeljni pojam evanđelja – ključ kršćanskog života*, 2015.

⁴⁶ Cf. Stella Morra, *Dio non si stanca. La misericordia come forma ecclesiale*, Edizione Dehoniane, Bologna, 2015., 101-109. See also: Antun Tamarut, *Crkva u nauku pape Franje*, 74-76.

2.3.2. 'Poor Church for the poor'

We find the most significant conciliar thought on evangelical poverty in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church - *Lumen Gentium*, where the value of poverty grounds on Christ's kenotic impoverishment (cf. Phil 2:6-7). So, the Church should follow the path of poverty of its Educator: "Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route ..." (LG 8).⁴⁷ And the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, outlines solidarity with the poor in its first sentence: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the followers of Christ" (cf. GS 1). Pope John XIII introduced the ecclesiastical term the 'Church of the Poor' in the context of the Social Encyclical *Mater et magistra*.⁴⁸ Theologian Stjepan Baloban claims that the Council did not embrace the idea of the poor Church and that it developed mainly in the Churches of Latin America during the post-conciliar period. "It is precisely in this segment that the Second Vatican Council is still an unfinished process and a historical challenge for the Church of Christ in the 21st century."⁴⁹

The fundamental conciliar commitment to evangelical poverty is central to Pope Francis at the beginning of his pontificate. The Gospel calls us to discard "self-centered paganism" but never lack the "option for those who are least and those whom society discards" (EG 195). In this way, he points out that Christ's attitude towards the poor inspires his desire for the Church's renewal and new relationships within it.⁵⁰ As the poor bear the mark of Christ them-

⁴⁷ "Just as Christ was sent by the Father to bring good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart, similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder. It does all it can to relieve their need and in them it strives to serve Christ." (LG 8).

⁴⁸ Pope John XXIII., *Mater et magistra. Enciklika o suvremenom razvoju socijalnog pitanja koji valja uskladiti s kršćanskim načelima* (15. V. 1961.), in: Marijan Valković (ur.), *Socijalni dokumenti Crkve. Sto godina katoličkog socijalnog nauka, Kršćanska sadašnjost*, Zagreb, 1991., 106-162.

⁴⁹ Cf. Stjepan Baloban, „Crkva siromašnih” od pape Ivana XXIII. do pape Franje, in: *Bogoslovska smotra* 84 (2014.), 3, 479-503, here: 501.

⁵⁰ Pope Francis introduced the World Day of the Poor for the entire Church, celebrated on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time. Cf. Papa Franjo, Apostolic letter *Misericordia et Misery - Mercy and Misery, at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*, Zagreb, 2017., br. 21.

selves, they can be our evangelizers: “For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. (...) This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom that God wishes to share with us through them” (EG 198).

The fourth chapter of the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* outlines the social dimension of evangelization. “The *kerygma* has a clear social content: at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others” (EG 177), and believers should be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor” (EG 187). For this reason, he places the challenge of exclusion and social inequality at the center of the Church’s mission and demands that the Catholic world oppose the ‘economy of exclusion’ (EG 53-54) and ‘social inequality that engenders violence’ (EG 59-60). Willing to urge people to face the challenge of inequality with determination, the Pope calls everyone “to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favours human beings” (EG 58).

Following the Church’s social teachings, in *Fratelli Tutti* and the environmental encyclical *Laudato Si* (cf. LS 93-95), Pope Francis reinterprets private property as a “something absolute and inviolable”. It has a social dimension and follows the principle of subordination to the universal destination of goods. “The right to private property can only be considered a secondary natural right derived from the principle of the universal destination of created goods. This has concrete consequences that ought to be reflected in the workings of society.”⁵¹

2.4. The Church and the world: a culture of encounter and dialogue

In his pontificate, Pope Francis aspires to encounter with others, interfaith dialogue, peacemaking and fraternity. He advocates for the image of our planet as a homeland and a humanity as a single human family living in a commonplace. Such thought is in line with the efforts of the previous popes, but there is something new about the time, manner and emphasis.⁵²

⁵¹ Cf. John Paul II., encyclical *The Social Concern - Sollicitudo rei socialis*, No. 42.

⁵² For a brief overview of the dialogical direction of the post-conciliar popes, see: Edvard Punda, *Dijaloško usmjerenje Crkve u nauku i djelovanju postkoncilskih papa*, in: *Bogoslovska smotra* 87 (2017.), 3, 617-634.

Our world faces fear, exclusion, populism, fundamentalism, and economic enslavement. It is 'torn apart by wars', widespread individualism, and doubts in life shared with others. Some theologians, theology students, and the faithful revisit the legacy of peace-making and ecumenism. In the spirit of the Council, Pope Francis tirelessly calls for human unity and dialogue, new encounters, fraternity and social friendship. Against the so-called 'throw away culture' and 'globalization of indifference', today's pope emphasizes *fraternity* as the key to living together, which presupposes a culture of new relationships, mutual support, co-responsibility and sharing, inspired by Christ's example (cf. EG 87-92).

The last papal encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, on fraternity and social friendship, is the response of the faithful and the Catholic Church (Christ's sacrament of salvation) to an increasingly enclosed world. Despite globalization, there is a coldness in today's world, a tendency towards localism, nationalism, and religious fanaticism, a world in which the culture of conflict and not the culture of encounter prevails (cf. FT 30).⁵³ Francis of Assisi's vision of fraternity inspired Pope Francis to write the social encyclical, but also his dialogue with Imam Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, i. e. their joint *Document on Universal Fraternity* at the interreligious meeting in Abu Dhabi.⁵⁴

Theologian Tonči Matulić claims Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* is "a modern attempt to actualize the council teaching contained in *Gaudium et Spes*".⁵⁵

Pope Francis let us know from the very beginning of his pontificate that the culture of encounter and dialogue is the style and instrument of the Church which goes forth. In today's world, we are all called to take a 'qualitative step forward' in understanding and

⁵³ The encyclical echoed in our theological circles. On April 21, 2021, the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Đakovo organized a scientific symposium on *The Core Themes and Messages of the Encyclical "Fratelli Tutti"*. The faculty portal provides a brief content of the eight articles presented at the symposium. On September 23, 2021., the Croatian Bishops' Conference Center for the Promotion of the Social Doctrine of the Church organized a symposium entitled: *Fratelli Tutti: A call to Social Friendship and Universal Fraternity*. Conference proceedings in: Stjepan Baloban/Dubravka Petrović Štefanec (ur.), *Fratelli tutti. Poziv na socijalno prijateljstvo i sveopće bratstvo*, Zagreb, 2022.

⁵⁴ The document entitled *Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, as well as Croatian versions of some other papal speeches in this spirit, can be found in the book: S. Bongiovanni – S. Tanzarella (ur.), *Sa svim brodolomima povijesti*, 287-296.

⁵⁵ Cf. Tonči Matulić, *Je li moguć „otvoren svijet” pape Franje?*, in: Stjepan Baloban/Dubravka Petrović Štefanec (ur.), *Fratelli tutti. Poziv na socijalno prijateljstvo i sveopće bratstvo*, Zagreb, 2022., 95-139, here: 138.

practising the culture of encounter and dialogue because we are in a new stage of the history of the human family. As he pointed out in the encyclical *Laudato Si*, “Beginning in the middle of the last century and overcoming many difficulties, there has been a growing conviction that our planet is a homeland, and that humanity is one people living in a shared home.” (LS 164). Awareness of this interdependence “obliges us to think of one world with a common plan.” (LS 164). To reach it, we should rethink our *relationship with others* from different nations, cultures, beliefs, or religions. One’s identity can no longer be built independently (autonomously) from other identities but in cooperation with others. We need to return to our true identity in God, the Creator of all people if we want to prevent violence, destruction and killing “in the name of an identity” that defines itself solely on *differences* and *isolation* from other people and nations. We also need to find our true identity in God to mediate the *spiritual basis* of responsibility towards our neighbours. It presents the foundation for building the ‘fraternity and social friendship’ to which Pope Francis aspires. In this sense, the task of religious representatives is to sensitize their believers to a common identity rooted in God, according to whom all people are brothers, sons, and daughters of God Most High.

To experience the fraternity of all people under one heaven of God, the same home of the Father, a shared, open and hospitable planet (cf. FT 90), we need to change our relationship toward nature, toward each other, above all to the ‘stranger’. We need to face that constant human source of fear, discomfort and competition so that we are not among those ‘passersby’, according to Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan, and become ‘people who care’ (cf. FT 70). In caring for foreigners, it is not about denying one’s identity, the ‘collective one’, or showing contempt for own people, nor empty ‘general love’ or ‘abstract universalism’, but about concrete love for concrete people, with their faces and suffering past (cf. FT 100-101).⁵⁶

We can achieve such a qualitative step forward in social relations if we promote the culture of the encounter that today’s pope persistently encourages. In promoting a culture of encounter, *dialogue* has an indispensable value. Pope Francis tirelessly calls for this fundamental category that allows actualizing what the Council

⁵⁶ Some theologians claim that the Christian community should interpret the current migration phenomenon in the light of the theological category of ‘signs of the times’: Cf. Carmelo Torcivia, *Migrations as the signs of the times. Theological-pastoral perspective*. in: S. Bongiovanni – S. Tanzarella (ur.), in: *Sa svim brodomima povijesti*, 43-58.

specifically asked for and did. Essential Church documents on dialogue are the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church in the Modern World, the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* on Ecumenism, and the declaration *Nostra Aetate* on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. We need to add the encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* of Pope Paul VI as a papal manifesto on dialogue that further develops the dialogic turn of the Council. Pope Francis outlines the need for dialogue in different areas and directions: a *dialogue between faith, reason and science* so that the human being can elevate “to the mystery transcending nature and human intelligence.” (EG 242); ecumenical dialogue to overcome historical divisions among Christians and thus contribute to the unity of the human family (cf. EG 244-246); *interreligious dialogue* as a necessary condition to overcome various religious fundamentalisms and be able to promote peace in the world (cf. EG 250-254). The Church’s dialogue is the realization of Christian *diakonia*, woven into the overall concern for the salvation of people.

To conclude, Pope Francis is not advocating a ‘powerless’, unrecognizable or withdrawn Church, but quite the opposite, the Church as a strong moral authority in society and active in the world. It is a *parricidal* Church that decisively bears witness, speaks freely and boldly, opens spaces for encounter and authentic dialogue, and also knows how to listen and accept criticism (cf. EG 31).⁵⁷ The faithful are called to foster their presence in society and the world by witnessing moral and spiritual commitment to the common welfare and ‘to leave behind them a somewhat better world than we found’ (EG 183).

3. CHURCH OF TRUE SPIRITUALITY

In the Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, the Pope set his goal “to repropose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time, with all its risks, challenges and opportunities” (GE 2). We should understand the Pope’s reflections on the Church’s missionary transformation and mission in today’s world in the light of the call to *growth in holiness*, which witnesses the Gospel (cf. GE 2-9; 110-111; 140-146) and actualizes the general call to holiness in the

⁵⁷ The term ‘parrhesia’ (Greek *parrhēsia*) is found in the *Acts of the Apostles* (2:29; 4:13, 31; 9, 27, 28; 13, 46; 18, 26; 19, 8, 26; 28, 31), literally means rapture, strength, courage, boldness, openness; free and direct speech, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Church, addressed to every believer: “Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect.” (LG 11).

Since the 1990s of the last century, the word ‘spirituality’ has become polysemic and obsolete. Namely, the ‘return of spirituality’ revealed the progressive weakening of the meaning of the Church and its spirituality, as well as modern man’s thirst for inward well-being and spiritual values. However, this enthusiasm for spirituality coincided with the loss of the prophetic, social and political dimensions of faith and its complete privatization. That is why the German theologian J.B. Metz draws a sharp dividing line between spirituality in postmodern times and Christian spirituality, which he calls ‘mysticism with open eyes’.⁵⁸

The Pope borrowed from his Ignatian-Jesuit spiritual matrix the insistence on the need for ‘the *discernment of spirits*’ (cf. GE 166-175) as a dynamic attitude of recognizing God’s presence and the action of his Spirit in the world and constantly searching for a way to respond best to his calls and expectations. He is deeply aware of the crucial meaning of a healthy Christian spiritual life and growth in grace and holiness for the credibility and future of the Church and its mission. According to the Pope, the Church’s challenge is to respond adequately to many people’s “thirst for God, lest they try to satisfy it with alienating solutions or with a disembodied Jesus who demands nothing of us with regard to others. Unless these people find in the Church a spirituality that can offer healing and liberation and fill them with life and peace while at the same time summoning them to fraternal communion and missionary fruitfulness, they will end up being taken in by solutions that neither make life truly human nor give glory to God.” (EG 89).⁵⁹

Without hesitation, he speaks critically and very openly about some phenomena in the Church and today’s prevailing spiritual trends in society that threaten a healthy Christian spiritual life. Pope Francis considers doctrinal correctness or doctrinal relativism are not crucial and as dangerous for the faithful as *practical relativism*. Practical relativism consists in “acting as if God did not exist, making decisions as if the poor did not exist, setting goals as

⁵⁸ Cf. Johann Baptist Metz, *Mystik der offenen Augen*, Herder, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2011.

⁵⁹ The Pope concluded the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* by talking about missionary spirituality; *Laudato Si* deals with ecological spirituality, and *Amoris Laetitia* about the spirituality of family life.

if others did not exist, working as if people who have not received the Gospel did not exist” (EG 80). We can recognize practical relativism in faith in the inconsistency of believers, in the gap and contradiction between words and deeds, in evangelical terms, in the hypocrisy from which - on the example of Jesus - this Pope wants to reform the Church so that the renewal of the Church in a ‘missionary perspective’ can take place.⁶⁰

This background motivated the Pope to warn about the appearance of *spiritual worldliness* in the Church. “Spiritual worldliness, which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, consists in seeking not the glory of the Lord, but human glory and personal well-being” (EG 93). The Pope further explains that ‘this insidious worldliness is evident in a number of attitudes which appear opposed, yet all have the same pretence of taking over the space of the Church’ (EG 95).⁶¹

In *Gaudete et Exsultate*, he critically speaks about two harmful errors “that cripple the power of the Gospel” (cf. GE 100): the first is when “Christianity becomes a sort of NGO stripped of the luminous mysticism so evident in the lives of Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Teresa of Calcutta, and many others.” The other harmful ideological error is found in “those who find suspect the social engagement of others, seeing it as a superficial, worldly, secular, materialist, communist or populist...” (cf. GE 101).

Furthermore, the Pope points out that we should beware of two old but always contemporary ideologies, which he calls *Neo-Gnosticism* and *Neo-Pelagianism*, both of which, in different ways, obscure the approach to holiness and the walk in holiness. Although he devoted an entire second chapter to the terms Gnosticism and Pelagianism in his Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, he mentions them for the first time in the Exhortation *Evangelli Gaudium*. We face these two spiritual and intellectual tendencies in contemporary society, but in some form also in the Church. Gnosticism is a ‘purely subjective faith’ that unilaterally emphasizes man’s self-knowledge. The second is the self-absorbed and Promethean neo-Pelagianism

⁶⁰ In EG 83, Pope Francis quotes the reflections of Pope Benedict XVI “the biggest threat of all gradually takes shape: *the gray pragmatism* of the daily life of the Church, in which all appears to proceed normally, while in reality faith is wearing down and degenerating into small-mindedness”.

⁶¹ “In some people we see an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church’s prestige, but without any concern that the Gospel have a real impact on God’s faithful people and the concrete needs of the present time.” (...) In others, this spiritual worldliness lurks behind a fascination with social and political gain,... It can also translate into a concern to be seen...” (EG 95).

“of those who ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style from the past. (...) These are manifestations of an anthropocentric immanentism” (EG 94).⁶² Gnostic tendencies in spirituality consider that with the human mind and words, they can understand and reach, conceptualize and ‘domesticate the mystery’, God, his grace and other’s life (cf. GE 40-42), while the ‘Pelagian mentality’ trusts in its own works, forgetting about God’s grace (cf. GE 52-59).⁶³

3.1. Some features of missionary spirituality

True spiritual life is always missionary in nature. In the fifth and final chapter of the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* the Pope calls for a *missionary spirituality*. Although it is not a synthesis of Christian spirituality, according to the Pope, we can recognize some features of missionary spirituality for our time.

It is primarily pentecostal/pneumatic spirituality because the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church, called to proclaim the Gospel.⁶⁴ Furthermore, missionary spirituality is always *Christocentric*: it starts from a personal encounter with the saving love of Jesus (cf. EG 264). The third chapter of the apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate, In the light of the Teacher*, outlines the holiness starting from the Beatitudes of Jesus to those in the Gospel of Matthew 25, 31-46.

We also find the Christ-centeredness of the Pope’s spirituality in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation to Young People and the Entire People of God: *Christus Vivit - Christ Lives*. Pope Francis calls everyone in the Church for a renewed encounter with Christ (cf. EG

⁶² Note the terms ‘Promethean’ and ‘self-referential’, which the Pope associates with the terms ‘neopolegianism’, ‘narcissistic’ and ‘elitist’. The result or consequence of such attitudes is *anthropocentric immanentism*. Cf. Mikolaj Martinjak, *Gnosticizam i neopelagijanizam – zapreka svetosti ili izvor konfuzije?*, in: *Nova prisutnost* 17 (2019.), 3, 491-502, here: 496.

⁶³ In 2018., the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published the letter, *Placuit Deo, It Pleased God*, to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Certain Aspects of Christian Salvation, in which Pope Francis refers to two tendencies such as Neo-Pelagianism and Neo-Gnosticism in the context of salvation. See in: Tonči Matulić, *Franjina obnova papinstva i Crkve*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb, 2022., 143-166.

⁶⁴ “Spirit-filled evangelizers means evangelizers fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit also grants the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness (*parrhesía*) in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition.” (EG 259).

3) because the Church will be credible again to the world only from its *inner joy* (cf. EG 4-8).⁶⁵

One significant aspect of Christian spirituality is *ecological spirituality*, which Pope Francis talks about in the sixth chapter of the encyclical *Laudato Si*. It focuses on an ecological conversion, which marks the beginning of ecospirituality. It requires a new view of God and his creative work. More specifically, it “it entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God’s loving gift... It also includes a caring awareness that we are not separate from other creatures, but that we form a wonderful universal communion with other living beings in the world. It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings.” (LS 220). The encyclical calls on Christians to take *responsibility* for the earth because care for all creation is an integral part of the Christian faith (cf. LS 64; 217).⁶⁶ Unlike some of the ‘green spiritualities’ present in various environmental movements, the Pope’s theocentric ecological spirituality emphasizes the due respect for all created for its own sake and not just for our good. Ultimately, it is about a mystical and sacramental view of the relationship with all creation.

The Pope’s encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* outlines another aspect of Christian spirituality, i.e. the *spirituality of world brotherhood* of the world or communitarian/community spirituality, already discussed, which flows as a guiding thread through all the Pope’s speeches and texts. It carries a trait of *Franciscan spirituality*.⁶⁷ It is a form

⁶⁵ The theologian George Augustin, inspired by reading the Pope’s apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, presents some elements of missionary spirituality in the following way: “Cultivate a personal relationship with God. Become more Christlike. Be open to the gifts of the Spirit. Convincingly represent your own mission. Be one another’s companions in faith. Be grateful for the good in the Church. Find a new way of acting in mutual relations. Live the Spirit of service. Meet Christ in the poor. Distinguish spirits. Resist temptations. Discover the power of intercessory prayer.” George Augustin, *S papom Franjtom u Crkvi koja izlazi*, 171-195, here: 173.

⁶⁶ On the joint contribution of Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the ecological spirituality practice revival, based on theocentric theology, see: Ivan Dodlek, *Ecological Spirituality. The contribution of pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I.*, in: *Bogoslovksa smotra* 91 (2021.), 5, 1005-1036.

⁶⁷ Jesuit Pope expresses his spirituality in the incredible love and acceptance of St. Francis of Assisi, especially his attitude towards the poor, the dispossessed and the classless (with all the vulnerable in society). At an audience for media rep-

of spirituality that calls believers to cross ethnic and confessional boundaries in society and the Church. It is about a spirituality dialogically open to others and different (religions, and immigrations). It is about the 'mystic' of living together in the Church that can turn 'into a real experience of brotherhood', which can then become the leaven of a universal brotherhood "capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our neighbour and finding God in every human being" (EG 92). The Trinity has left its mark on all creation, so the world has become a web of relationships. This interconnectedness "invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity." (LS 240).

Finally, relying on the words of Paul VI⁶⁸, Pope Francis singles out *popular piety* as an exceptional 'evangelizing force' of the Church (cf. EG 123). 'People's mysticism', he writes, "receives in its own way the entire Gospel and embodies it in expressions of prayer, fraternity, justice, struggle and celebration" and because "the gospel has an intrinsic principle of totality", it is proclaimed to all people until it has healed and strengthened all aspects of humanity (cf. EG 237). The theology of the people focuses on the faith of ordinary people, and their popular piety is a *locus theologicus* (cf. EG 126). "Popular piety is a 'legitimate' way of living the faith" (EG 124) and "a true expression of the spontaneous missionary activity of the people of God" (EG 122). Popular piety is different from the pious elitism of the Pentecostal movements, which "promote devotions reflecting an individual and sentimental way of living the faith", and often in these devotions 'private revelations' are imposed as the only valid ones (cf. EG 70). The Pope clearly says he cannot support "an idea of holiness that would ignore injustice in the world" (EG 90).

In the spirit of the Pope's call for holiness in the modern world, we conclude that *lived holiness* is the best argument for the existence of the Church and its testimony of God's love in Jesus Christ.

representatives on March 16, 2013, the Pope told reporters how he came to choose the name Francis and, among other things, said: "For me, he is a man of poverty, a man of peace, a man who loves and protects creation". The Pope admits that St. Francis of Assisi inspired him to write the two encyclicals *Laudato Si* (No. 10-13) and *Fratelli Tutti* (No. 2).

⁶⁸ "Popular piety certainly has its limits. It is often subject to penetration by many distortions of religion and even superstitions. It frequently remains at the level of forms of worship not involving a true acceptance by faith. It can even lead to the creation of sects and endanger the true ecclesial community. It is rich in values. It manifests a thirst for God which only the simple and poor can know. It makes people capable of generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism when it is a question of manifesting belief." (Papa Pavao VI., *Evangelii nuntiandi* – *Nauještaj evandolja*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb 2000., br. 48).

The clearest sign of the presence of Christ's Spirit in the life of the Church is the holiness manifested in the life of Christians. That is why the guiding image of church renewal for the Pope can only be radicalization and deepening Christian holiness in our time. Christians sanctify the Church with their holiness. The holiness of the community, the people of God, incorporates every consecrated life. Such holiness makes it possible to live the Christian ideals of community, solidarity and non-violence and to build a Christian personality motivated and carried by the power of the Spirit of Christ.

CONCLUSION

On the fiftieth anniversary of the ending of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Francis, in the bull 'the Face of Mercy', calls for the event of the Council to be kept alive in the mind and life of the Church: "The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which, for too long, had made the Church a kind of fortress, were torn down, and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father's love in the world."⁶⁹ Pope's words clearly express his key intention: to renew today's Church in the *spirit* of the Council.

As already known, the acceptance of each Council in the Church concerns the entire people of God, and it takes place under the leadership of Peter's successor, the Pope of Rome. At the end of this paper, we summarize the results of our research to demonstrate how Pope Francis articulated and deepened the already present conciliar and ecclesiological reflections in the Church.

The starting point of the Pope's ecclesiology is the *missionary renewal* of the Church: it is the goal of all the Pope's attempts to reform the structures of the Church. They all should serve the new missionary zeal of the Church. It is the Pope's ecclesiology of the *evangelizing people of God* and the biblical call for the Church to constantly go forth. Pope Francis makes it clear that *synodal*

⁶⁹ Papa Franjo, *Misericordiae vultus* – *Lice milosrda*, br. 4.

communion is the key to the renewal of God's people, which should encourage circularity between the believers' sense of faith and the teaching of the Church.

The *maternal* and *healing* image of the Church summarizes the foundations of the Pope's ecclesiological preoccupation, such as mercy, commitment to the poor, the periphery, human brotherhood, and promotion of a culture of encounter and dialogue. The ecclesiology of the conciliar pastoral constitution of the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, presents the image of the Church that enters into dialogue with the world, *serves* man and the world, *goes forth* to people, all the people, but above all those on the social peripheries. Finally, Pope Francis points out that the renewal of the Church requires a *return to the heart of the Gospel* and openness to the Holy Spirit since they are everlasting sources of *true spirituality* in the Church.

Željko Mardešić, a distinguished Catholic intellectual and a good connoisseur of the spirit of the Council, indicates which attitudes, answers or faces the Church should present in its encounter with the world or healing. One can see the incredible *resemblance* between the vision of the Church of Pope Francis with that of Mardešić. As he says, it is about the behaviours of the church community that the modern world should recognize in it, namely: the Church of the poor and the overlooked, the Church of goodness and merciful humanity, the Church of hope and joy, the Church of peacemaking, reconciliation and forgiveness, the Church of dialogue with the world.⁷⁰ In the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and convinced of the power of the Gospel, Pope Francis calls for a mature and responsible ecclesial and Christian mission in today's world.

⁷⁰ Cf. Željko Mardešić, *Crkva i suvremeni svijet: današnje perspektive*, u: *Bogoslovska smotra*, 77 (2005.), 934-935. Cf. see: Tonči Matulić, *Mardešićeva vizija Crkve u svjetlu ideje koncilskog kršćanstva*, in: *Crkva u Hrvatskoj kakvu je zagovarao Željko Mardešić*. Radovi Studijskog dana, Crkva u svijetu, Split, 2018., 25-48.