

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL FACULTY
Department of Systematic and Pastoral Theology

ThLic. Magda Bušková

The Theology of Holiness According to St John Paul II

Dissertation

Director: prof. PhLic. Vojtěch Novotný, Th.D.

Consultant: Mgr. ThLic. Pavel Frývaldský, Th.D.

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Statutory Declaration

1. I declare that I have prepared the submitted work independently and used the indicated sources and literature.
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In Prague, 29th of November 2023

ThLic. Magda Bušková

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Abstract

The primary focus of this study on the theology of holiness, according to St John Paul II, is to explore how he understands and interprets Christian holiness and what perspective he brings to the subject. The study offers a brief view of the saints he beatified and canonised, followed by insight into the moments of his life and spirituality, exploring, in line with the approach of spiritual theology, the appeal to understand him from within. The study's approach further reflects the theme of holiness from the position of selected texts of the Second Vatican Council. It intentionally takes into account the post-conciliar interpretation of Karol Wojtyła to consider the roots of his theology of holiness. The research of the theology of holiness in John Paul II's magisterium follows within selected encyclicals, especially *Redemptor Hominis*, *Dives in Misericordia*, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, and *Redemptoris Missio*, to explore aspects and characteristics he emphasised. The basic thesis and the study's golden thread is the approach of Christian holiness described as the union of Jesus Christ with a Christian in the Holy Spirit and the realisation of such union in the Church.

Keywords

St John Paul II, holiness, union with Christ, Holy Spirit, mission, kingdom of God

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My brothers and sisters, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and pleasing to him and is perfect.
(Rom 12:1-2)

Introduction

i. Project Aim

The first Slavic pope, his long pontificate of almost 27 years had a significant influence on the church and the world in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. On 16 October 1978, Karol Wojtyła was elected as the successor to Peter's seat and became Pope John Paul II. He was an outstanding personality, a ground-breaker, and the author of numerous writings, many of which emphasised aspects of Christian humanism. He often took a forward-looking position; at other times, he maintained the church's traditional approach, such as in the area of ethics. He was not spared criticism, however, and was not afraid to address controversial topics. The Polish author Maciej Zięba OP has dealt with current challenges and critical points related to St John Paul II in Poland in his book *Pontyfikat na czasy zamętu. Jan Paweł II wobec wyzwań Kościoła i świata* (Pontificate for a time of confusion. John Paul II and the challenges of the Church and the world).¹ The Polish Church is undergoing significant transformation. John Paul II was a well-known, even iconic figure, but the generation that experienced his entire pontificate – whom Zięba calls *pokolenie daru oraz długu* (the generation of the gift and the debt)² – and who were enriched by John Paul II's personality, his works, and by their meetings with him, is already passing away. Furthermore, interest in him seems to be waning among the younger generation.³ Zięba considers this 'a great and real potential that is little used today'⁴ and suggests that 'these people would gladly repay at least a fraction of the debt they owe to the Lord of History for the gift of meeting John Paul II'.⁵ It is a courageous generation that together with John Paul II fought against communism and was directly formed by his pontificate.

The Czech Republic, in which this thesis is being written, shares with Poland an oppressive history of communism and a generation influenced by this pope, but the figure of John Paul II receives less attention here. But each generation must rediscover the riches

¹ Maciej Zięba OP, *Pontyfikat na czasy zamętu. Jan Paweł II wobec wyzwań Kościoła i świata* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo w Drodze, 2020). The author states that his publication is 'based on previously published articles that have been significantly expanded, completely re-edited and re-composed' (my translation). The material in chapter two was previously unpublished.

² Zięba OP, 120.

³ Zięba, *Pontyfikat na czasy zamętu*, 117–119.

⁴ Zięba OP, 120.

⁵ Zięba OP, 120.

of the faith for itself, and that includes the personality and teachings of St John Paul II. It should also be noted that critical attitudes towards the church and the figure and canonisation of St John Paul II have emerged.

It is clearly necessary to approach such matters fairly, to judge the facts through the eyes of the world at the time: to study the sources in the context of that time but interpret them in the light of today. In this way, two principles of the Second Vatican Council are also researched, namely the terms *aggiornamento*⁶ and *ressourcement*,⁷ which speak of updating, but also of returning to, the original sources, to the roots available to us to draw from, namely the Bible, the Church Fathers, and the saints. We need to read both principles together.

The times require a new way of introducing the doctrine of holiness and dealing with critical issues in order to enrich the new generation and to help people discover love, holiness, and a deeper understanding of human beings through both Christological and anthropological interpretations. St John Paul II is considered an inspiration, on both the personal and the ecclesial levels, for living an authentic life in light of the Gospel and for fostering holiness. In his current pontificate Pope Francis calls everyone to the path of holiness in his exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, and states that ‘holiness is the most attractive face of the Church’.⁸

ii. Methodology

Holiness is a concept with meanings and contents that vary according to the cultural and religious context. In this paper, I work with reflections on holiness in the context of the Roman Catholic Church. The primary focus is St John Paul II, how he understands and interprets Christian holiness, and the perspective he brings to the subject. The main thread is a study of holiness as fundamentally relating to ‘union with Christ’ in the Holy Spirit,⁹ an interpretation of holiness which is specific to the teachings of St John Paul II. The study offers the insight into this pope’s theology of holiness, drawn primarily from

⁶ Basil Christopher Butler, *Searchings. Essays and Studies*, ed. Valentine Rice (New York: Geoffrey Chapman Publishers, 1974), 255.

⁷ Stephen Happel and David Tracy, *A Catholic Vision* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 136. On the conciliar concept of *aggiornamento*, see Christopher Butler, *The Theology of Vatican II*, Revised and Enlarged Version (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981), 1–27.

⁸ Francis, “*Gaudete et Exsultate*. Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in the Today’s World,” 19 March 2018, para. 9, Vatican.va.

⁹ “Vatican Council II. *Lumen Gentium*,” 21 November, 1964, para. 50, Vatican.va.

the Magisterium of this canonised saint, especially the encyclicals, but also from his lived spirituality.

The encyclicals are the primary documents, from which I have selected a few most relevant to the theme of holiness, which I reflect on and interpret as union with Christ in the Holy Spirit. Three encyclicals, *Redemptor Hominis*,¹⁰ *Dives in Misericordia*,¹¹ and *Dominum et Vivificantem*,¹² which I consider exemplars, represent the Trinitarian focus of John Paul II and are selected for analysis in this study. Also included in the selected group of his encyclicals is the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*,¹³ which forms part of the analysis of the Christological character of holiness for the purpose of this work.

In terms of methodology, this study considers the theological method¹⁴ with the perspective of spiritual theology, a ‘theological discipline that deals with spiritual life as a personal relationship with God with all that this relationship involves.’¹⁵ This discipline, which has been taught at the Pontifical Gregorian University since 1919,¹⁶ is also viewed as being ‘based on biblical Revelation and qualified Christian experience, systematically examining the union of human beings with God in Christ by the Holy Spirit in the history of the Church and the world and by human cooperation, and describes a person’s organic development from the beginning to holiness, taking into account diversity and the uniqueness of individual paths.’¹⁷ Such an interpretation of spiritual theology has a notable Trinitarian dimension, at the core of which is ‘the union of the human person with God in Christ’.¹⁸ This study does not intend to provide a comprehensive theological interpretation of the teachings of the Magisterium, but to focus on magisterial teaching on holiness through the eyes of a particular saint who himself showed and lived holiness. The methodological approach focuses on elements of holiness regarding the union of

¹⁰ John Paul II, “*Redemptor Hominis*,” March 4, 1979, Vatican.va.

¹¹ John Paul II, “*Dives in Misericordia*,” November 30, 1980, Vatican.va.

¹² John Paul II, “*Dominum et Vivificantem*,” May 18, 1986, Vatican.va.

¹³ John Paul II, “*Redemptoris Missio*,” July 12, 1990, Vatican.va.

¹⁴ As Downey comments ‘,Spiritual life is the Christian life in practice through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Here the spiritual life is viewed in terms of the gradual formation of the human person by grace and Spirit, the transformation of human nature into a new creation...At the heart of this method is some understanding of central Christian doctrines – Trinity, Christ, church, sacraments – indeed the whole spectrum of the Christian mysteries which are assumed to be normative for evaluating and judging the authenticity of spirituality’. Michael Downey, *Understanding Christian Spirituality* (New York / Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 124.

¹⁵ Michal Altrichter, *Spirituální teologie* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2017), 17.

¹⁶ Pavel Vojtěch Kohut OCD, *Co je spirituální teologie?* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2007), 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 34 (my translation). Here, Kohut modifies and expands a definition offered by the Spanish theologian F.R. Salvador. Federico Ruiz Salvador, *Caminos Del Espíritu. Compendio de Teología Spiritual* (Madrid: EDE, 1998), 285.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35 (my translation). This is what Kohut highlights as ‘the very subject of spiritual theology’.

a human person with God in Christ and developing the doctrine from and through Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit; a parallel focus will be the development of the spiritual life.

Correspondingly, the dissertation will follow two lines of enquiry: a brief reflection on the life and spirituality of John Paul II, and a focused insight into his Magisterium, primarily through the selected encyclicals as stated above.

iii. Work with Sources

Numerous books and reflections have been written about the life, spirituality and writings of John Paul II. He was one of the most influential personalities and prolific authors of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. His views, actions and works, sometimes considered conservative, or contrarily too liberal or controversial, but certainly inspiring, have given rise to many writings, studies and academic and popular articles. Electronic databases such as www.academia.edu also offer valuable material concerning the late pope. Observations from the Polish context have already been mentioned above, as reflected on by Maciej Zięba.¹⁹ John Paul II is an author who has been worked on many times, and much can be assumed.

The first chapter of the dissertation, which examines holiness in the lived experience of St John Paul II, explores the autobiographical work *Gift and Mystery*,²⁰ which offers a summary of the development of the Pope's spiritual vocation and his life of following Christ. Tad Szulc, a Pole born in Warsaw, provides a valuable insight into the life of this personality. Szulc emigrated during the Second World War and later became a *New York Times* journalist and writer. His biography of John Paul II²¹ reveals a profound knowledge of the Polish soul, and of Polish history and culture, and captures essential elements for understanding the formation of the character, views and spirituality of the man and priest Karol Wojtyła and the pontiff John Paul II. The extensive biography written by the American author George Weigel²² offers a detailed analysis of the various stages of the life and work of this personality and a well-researched commentary on the Pope's thinking and the reasons for his personal and ecclesial views, including an erudite

¹⁹ Zięba, *Pontyfikat na czasy zamętu*.

²⁰ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of My Priestly Ordination* (Rockland: Wheeler Publishing, 1996).

²¹ Tad Szulc, *Pope John Paul II. The Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

²² George Weigel, *Witness to Hope. The Biography of John Paul II*, Edition Cliff Street Books (New York: HarperCollins, 2001).

description of contemporaneous events in the church and the world. In their contribution, Sławomir Oder and Saverio Gaeta²³ focus on Christian holiness and offer examples from the daily life of the Pope which show his humanity and charisma as a follower of Christ, while distinguishing the human, priestly and mystical facets of his life. George Williams²⁴ brings a precious contribution that explores the inner life of the Pope, his philosophy and ideology, and also provides theological insights into his formation as man and priest and the background to his actions and his thinking.

A conciliar perspective is based on the documents *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), focusing on one of the most quoted passages of GS 22 and GS 24 by John Paul II. The author Christopher Butler, a direct participant in the Council, was selected for reflection with his *Theology of Vatican II*²⁵ and *Searchings. Essays and Studies*,²⁶ and supplemented by the insights of O'Malley²⁷ and other commentators that closely converge with the topic. In the context of the conciliar documents, the reflection also focuses on Wojtyła's work *Sources of Renewal*²⁸ to gain insight into the conception of his roots of the theology of holiness which I consider essential as the basis for subsequent reflection on his encyclicals.

The primary sources for this work are the selected encyclicals. Regarding the doctrine of holiness by St John Paul II, I am yet to discover a comprehensive monograph that specifically concerns the theology of holiness in this pope's encyclicals, although Richard Spinello has written a more wide-ranging theological commentary on all 14 encyclicals.²⁹ Spinello's technical analysis explores the Pope's anthropological, Christological, pneumatological and other approaches to a theology of holiness. Spinello's interpretations and comments on John Paul II's encyclicals are mainly used with the addition of shorter accompanying comments. The reason for their selection is to provide a comprehensive view of the encyclicals along with a detailed analysis of the themes and specifics of each document and their best convergence with the dissertation topic.

²³ Sławomir Oder and Saverio Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint. The Life and Faith of Pope John Paul II and the Case for Canonization* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2010). Oder was the postulator for the canonisation process.

²⁴ George Huntston Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II. Origins of His Thought and Action* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981).

²⁵ Christopher Butler, *The Theology of Vatican II* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967).

²⁶ Butler, *Searchings*.

²⁷ John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

²⁸ Karol (Pope John Paul II) Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal. The Implementation of the Second Vatican Council*, Revised Ed. 1979 (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

²⁹ Richard A. Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II. An Introduction and Commentary* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

iv. Summary of the Argument

Chapter 1 will present insights into the path of holiness taken by Karol Józef Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II. This introductory chapter focuses on the steps John Paul II takes to fulfil the Christian path of holiness. What did he do to follow Christ? And how was his conversion manifested? The next chapter concentrates on the perspective offered by the Second Vatican Council. Chapter 3 focuses on the appeal to meditate on the encyclicals and what it may mean in John Paul II's view. Drawing on the Magisterium of John Paul II, primarily the selected encyclicals, chapter 4 offers a more detailed view of the Christological character of holiness and will seek to demonstrate why the Pope places such an emphasis on it. Chapter 5 reflects on the pneumatological character of holiness, which is imprinted especially in the encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*. It brings views on aspects of holiness that can be described as a renewed understanding of Christian holiness while illustrating the particular approach of John Paul II.

1. St John Paul II: Living Holiness

From the long life and extensive works of this saint, this chapter will select and explore some of the significant aspects of his Christian spiritual experience with the revelation of God, applying the ‘hagiographic perspective’³⁰ of spiritual theology and with a particular focus on personal conversion. Applying Kohut’s approach to our study of John Paul II, acquiring some basic information from the life of this saint and focusing on his ‘gradual spiritual growth’ will enable us to understand not just what he wrote and what he said, but how he became a personality with such a high level of authority and holiness.³¹ Sławomir Oder, the postulator of John Paul II’s canonisation,³² reminds us of some crucial words spoken by the Pope, words which are taken into special account in this chapter’s reflections on his spirituality: ‘They try to understand me from without. But I can only be understood from within.’³³ But what does this mean? Weigel believes that Karol Wojtyła / John Paul II was firmly rooted in the faith and held ‘the conviction that Jesus Christ is the answer to the question that is every human life.’³⁴ Weigel goes on to suggest that ‘to understand Karol Wojtyła “from inside” is to understand him as a disciple.’³⁵ This approach applies equally to understanding the later pope. Understanding a person *from within* or *from inside* means becoming acquainted with their relationship with God and others and with their spiritual life and its development. This paper requires, then, a focus on understanding his spiritual life in union with Christ, the key to which is personal conversion as an aspect of holiness. The challenge to understand John Paul II’s inner life is therefore vital to this study and matches the methodology of spiritual theology.

³⁰ Regarding this methodological approach, Kohut points out that ‘the way of presentation proceeds from a certain person’s concrete life ... [leading] from lived spirituality to theological reflection’ (my translation). Kohut, *Co je spirituální teologie?* 27.

³¹ Kohut OCD, Pavel Vojtěch, 27–28.

³² The postulator, who performs the first (diocesan) phase of the investigation, is appointed ‘to conduct research into the life of the Servant of God, which is useful for knowing the reputation of holiness or of martyrdom, the reputation of intercessory power and of the importance of the cause for the Church.’ See The Congregation of the Causes of Saints, “Sanctorum Mater. Instruction for Conducting Diocesan or Eparchial Inquiries in the Causes of Saints,” 2007, art. 17, para. 1, accessed 1 June 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/csaints/documents/rc_con_csaints_doc_20070517_sanctorum-mater_en.html#Postulator_of_the_Cause.

³³ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 133.

³⁴ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 10.

³⁵ Weigel, 10.

To achieve its aims, this chapter will apply a deductive approach to its exploration of union with Christ. First, the reasons for the canonisation of John Paul II are presented. This is followed by questioning: What steps did he take to fulfil the Christian path of holiness? What did he do to follow Christ and continually adhere to Him? The reflection on holiness also makes note of how other people perceived him.

1.1. John Paul II Elevates Holiness on the Altar

This section will open the theme of holiness by discussing the Pope's contribution to promoting the veneration of the saints.

The saints are a significant phenomenon in the Roman Catholic Church. In the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council (re)confirms the necessity of taking the path of holiness: 'In the Church, everyone, whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3; cf. Eph. 1:4).' (LG 39) This represents a return to a biblical perspective on holiness, which the Council submits through Jesus' appeal: 'You must be perfect – just as your Father in heaven is perfect' (Mt. 5:48, cf. LG 40). As every Christian is called to holiness, the saints represent this path in a particularly visible manner, showing flashes of the invisible in a visible way.

The process of canonisation – sainthood – comprises several phases and is regulated by numerous documents. Čačík outlines the updates made to the canonisation process in 1983,³⁶ including John Paul II's apostolic constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*³⁷ and *Normae servandae*,³⁸ through to the amendment made by Pope Francis which added to the reasons for declaring someone a saint by motu proprio *Maiorem hac dilectionem*.³⁹ 'The offer of life is a new cause for the beatification and canonisation procedure, distinct from the causes based on martyrdom and on the heroism of virtues.'⁴⁰

³⁶ Marián Bartoloměj Čačík, "Změny v kanonizačním procesu po roce 1983," *Revue církevního práva. Church Law Review*, no. 71 (XXIV, 2018): 81–99.

³⁷ John Paul II, "*Divinus Perfectionis Magister*," 25 January 1983, accessed 30 December 2019, Vatican.va.

³⁸ "Normae servandae in inquisitionibus ab Episcopis faciendis in Causis Sanctorum," Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi, 1983, <http://www.causesanti.va/it/documenti/normae-servandae-english.html>.

³⁹ Pope Francis, "*Maiorem Hac Dilectionem*," 11 July 2017, Vatican.va.

⁴⁰ Francis, para. 2.

Classic hagiography emphasised the personal virtues of the saint. Today, with the growth of technologies and consumerism, against which Pope Francis repeatedly warns,⁴¹ we will obviously not succeed so much with virtues such as temperance (Lat. *temperantia*). Virtues are sometimes even considered a weakness. However, also thanks to John Paul II, holiness is profiled mainly as testimony (Lat. *testimōnium*) to a life lived with God. Such a testimony is pertinent to his own life and that of the many saints he beatified and canonised: concrete personalities with concrete life stories. Oder reminds us that ‘with the intention of offering the faithful a variegated mosaic of models to imitate, John Paul II proclaimed 483 saints and 1,345 blessed during his pontificate.’⁴² Why did this pope place such an emphasis on visible holiness? Michael Walsh provides a detailed analysis of the number and typology of people beatified and canonised by John Paul II.⁴³ Walsh suggests that one possible reason for the increase in the number of saints during John Paul II’s pontificate was his extensive worldwide travels and his wish that people should have saints from their own countries: ‘To some considerable extent, where John Paul was going to dictated who was to be raised to the altar.’⁴⁴ Walsh, whose methodology differs from that of Delooz,⁴⁵ suggests that a large group consisted of martyrs, including lay martyrs, but found that most of the canonised were priests, followed by nuns.⁴⁶ He also notes the Pope’s suggestion that he was sorry for the absence of a married couple.⁴⁷ Some of John Paul’s canonisations were controversial, such as that in 2002 of the Spanish priest Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer y Albas, one of the founders of the *Opus Dei* movement. Szulc presents arguments on both sides.⁴⁸ As a mystic, Escriva abounded with the spirituality of St John of the Cross and St Theresa of Jesus and was a spiritual and practical leader of an organisation ‘whose members, clergy and lay Catholics would be of spiritual and professional distinction. In the strict sense of the word – not pejorative – *Opus Dei* was meant to be an elite, never a mass movement’,⁴⁹ an apostolic movement for both priests and lay people. Criticism of Escriva concerned a number of matters related to the period of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and, after it, to the unusually rapid

⁴¹ Francis, “*Laudato Si’*,” 24 May 2015, para. 34, 55, accessed 1 October 2021, Vatican.va.

⁴² Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 172.

⁴³ J. Michael Walsh, “Pope John Paul II and His Canonizations,” *Studies in Church History* 47 (Saints and Sanctity) (2011): 415–437.

⁴⁴ Walsh, 433.

⁴⁵ Walsh, 428. Pierre Delooz, *Sociologie et canonisations* (Liege: Faculte de Droit, 1969).

⁴⁶ Walsh, “Pope John Paul II and His Canonizations,” 431.

⁴⁷ Walsh, 434.

⁴⁸ Szulc, *Pope John Paul II. The Biography*, 188–91.

⁴⁹ Szulc, 189.

rise of *Opus Dei* and its commendation by the Pope and others.⁵⁰ The Pope said the following in his homily on Escrivá's canonisation:

He continues to remind you of the need not to let yourselves be frightened by a materialist culture that threatens to dissolve the genuine identity of Christ's disciples. He liked to repeat forcefully that the Christian faith is opposed to conformism and interior inertia. Following in his footsteps, spread in society the consciousness that we are all called to holiness whatever our race, class, society or age.⁵¹

John Paul aimed to bring the saints and their example closer to the people: they are not distant saints, from many centuries ago or countries far away, but people from their own regions and lands. Holiness therefore brings the saint's humanity closer to the people: John Paul's approach to canonisation emphasises humanity and the transformation of daily life according to Christ's example.

1.2. Why Was He Canonised?

On 13 May 2005, the Polish priest Sławomir Oder took on the crucial role of postulator for the beatification of John Paul II, a process which precedes canonisation. His findings are elaborated in the book *Why He Is a Saint*.⁵² Oder distinguishes three views of John Paul II: 'the man', 'the pope', and 'the mystic',⁵³ and in presenting a host of rich and fascinating facts and fragments from his life creates the image of a man who witnesses to a life of holiness.

We often think of Christianity as something separate from the faithful themselves, as if a life of faith were something ethereal and personal. To Karol Wojtyła, Christianity was a concrete experience, a thing of flesh and blood: the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, who became a man in order to experience the joys and suffering of humanity. This is why Karol Wojtyła's religious testimony proved to be so remarkably fecund and influential, as documented by the numerous

⁵⁰ Szulc, 189 ff.

⁵¹ John Paul II, "Canonization of St Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer. Homily of John Paul II," 6 October 2002, para. 3, accessed 31 March 2021, Vatican.va.

⁵² Oder is now president of the Vatican City State's Court of Appeal. He was appointed juridical vicar by Pope Francis in the vicariate of the Roman diocese.

⁵³ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*.

letters sent to the Postulatio after his death by people whom he had inspired to understand their true calling.⁵⁴

John Paul died on 2 April 2005 and very soon afterwards his followers spread the motto ‘Santo subito’ (Holy now; Make him a saint immediately!). Pope Benedict XVI stated that ‘taking into consideration the exceptional circumstances put forward during the Audience granted to the same Cardinal Vicar General on 28 April 2005,’ the usual period of five years would not be applied in the case of John Paul II and began the preparatory examination process for beatification and canonisation.⁵⁵ The accelerated process aroused both joy and criticism. Investigations into a prospective saint’s life entail extensive inquiries regarding ‘the life, virtues or martyrdom and reputation of sanctity or martyrdom, alleged miracles, as well as, if it be the case, the ancient cult of the Servant of God.’⁵⁶ In addition to ‘heroic virtue’,⁵⁷ the process of beatification also requires at least one miracle. The miraculous healing of the nun Sister Marie Simone Pierre Normand in 2006 was confirmed by the doctor’s Concilium and recognised by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in 2010.⁵⁸ John Paul II was finally beatified on 1 May 2011 by Pope Benedict XVI. Paweł Zuchniewicz provides a detailed insight into many cases of healing and other miracles during the life and even after the death of John Paul II.⁵⁹ The miracles offer a clear testimony to his holiness and his extraordinary relationship to human suffering. Interestingly, on the day of the beatification, the second miracle required for canonisation took place, namely the miraculous healing of Mrs Floribeth Mor in Costa Rica.⁶⁰ Pope Francis canonised John Paul II on 27 April 2014.

1.3. A Selection of Significant Moments from His Life

Before going on to the detail of the topic, it will be helpful to offer a closer view of the inner life of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II by introducing some significant moments from

⁵⁴ Cardinal José Saraiva Martins and Archbishop Edward Nowak, “Response of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the Examination of the Cause for Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God John Paul II” (Congregation for the Causes of Saints, 9 May 2005), accessed 31 March 2021, Vatican.va.

⁵⁵ John Paul II, “*Divinus Perfectionis Magister*,” pt. 1.1.

⁵⁶ John Paul II, pt. 1.1.

⁵⁷ See the entry for ‘Saint’ in D. Attwater (ed.), *A Catholic Dictionary* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 444.

⁵⁸ Zuchniewicz Paweł, *Záznaky Jana Pavla II.* (Uhřice: Pavel Nebojsa – Doron, 2020), 9.

⁵⁹ Zuchniewicz Paweł, *Záznaky Jana Pavla II.*

⁶⁰ Zuchniewicz, *Záznaky Jana Pavla II.*, 10.

his life. Deciding which moments and events to choose, however, especially given the richness of the spiritual, human, literary and pastoral dimensions of the personal and ecclesiastical life of this well-known saint, is no easy task. The solution to the problem is to be found in the main thread of this study, namely holiness in the context of union with Christ and personal conversion. So, what was it that deepened John Paul's union with Jesus Christ. How did he remain close to Him? How did daily conversion manifest itself in his life?

First, let us focus on the religious and cultural background from which his faith grew. Oder informs us: 'His family was profoundly bound up with Polish traditions and deeply rooted in the Catholic faith.'⁶¹ The spirituality of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II has always been fundamentally linked to Polish Catholicism, reflecting the strong foundation of Polish faith, developed over a thousand years of history of the Church in Poland. A sense of sharing in a firm faith can be heightened during periods of political upheaval, as Strassberg notes: 'During the period of division of the kingdom into autonomous principalities (twelfth-fourteenth centuries), when the supreme princely power did not have much authority, or in the period following the eighteenth-century partitions of Poland, when the nation was deprived of its own statehood, the Polish people were linked together only by the church.'⁶²

Karol Wojtyła was born on 18 May 1920 in Wadowice, a small Polish city about 50km southwest of Krakow. What were the characteristics of religious life during this period of the so-called Second Polish Republic (1918–1939)? In the year of Wojtyła's birth, the Polish army defeated the Soviet army at Warsaw and successfully halted the spread of Soviet communism further into Europe.⁶³ The decisive battle, 'The Miracle on the Vistula',⁶⁴ is traditionally assigned to the intercessions of the Virgin Mary, and the later Pope liked to remember and bring to people's attention the Virgin's role in stemming the Soviet advance.⁶⁵ The active stance taken by Wojtyła/John Paul against totalitarian systems and their curtailing of human freedoms probably had its roots here. He faced the deeds and attitudes of such regimes by entrusting them, throughout his life, to the intercessions of the Virgin Mary.

⁶¹ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 12.

⁶² Barbara Strassberg, "Polish Catholicism in Transition," in *World Catholicism in Transition*, ed. Thomas M. Gannon SJ (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 185.

⁶³ Szulc, *Pope John Paul II. The Biography*, 3.

⁶⁴ 15 August 1920, Szulc, 3.

⁶⁵ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 11–12.

The meaning and role of religious life acquired a broader and more intensive character after the First World War, when Pope Pius XI prioritised the message of peace and the mission of the Church. Pius XI brought refreshment and a new sense of purpose to church life and ‘gave special attention to the Catholic Action which he provided with a firm form in 1925.’⁶⁶ Franzen adds: ‘The common experience in the trenches and the common ideals of the youth movement led to a rediscovery of the church as a community. Hand in hand with this went the liturgical movement and “ecumenical” understanding between the denominations. A change in the image of the church was basic to this new church consciousness.’⁶⁷ This renewal of the church certainly influenced the period of Karol’s childhood and youth. This was a time when ‘the church was rediscovered as the living Christ and a work of God. This anti-individualistic attitude was inspired by the community-oriented concept of the *Corpus Christi Mysticum*, of which individuals are only the members.’⁶⁸

Like most Poles, Wojtyła/John Paul II was a strong and indeed lifelong patriot. Weigel reminds us that ‘Poles have never thought of themselves as a part of “eastern Europe”’; Poland is in *central* Europe, and the centre of Poland, its history and culture, is Kraków.’⁶⁹ It was to Krakow that Karol moved for his university studies. Barbara Strassberg explored the relationship between religious life and patriotism in Poland, focusing especially on the period after the Second World War, when Poland came under the influence of Soviet communism:

To be defined as a Roman Catholic, to participate in religious practices, and above all, to declare respect for the church, is to be a Polish patriot. Without any other point of reference for national identity, patriotism means defending the church against communist attempts to minimize its influence and maintaining the Polish religious dialect.⁷⁰

How does this relate to holiness and conversion in the life of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II? In the Roman Catholic Church, a distinction is made between the ‘initial conversion’

⁶⁶ August Franzen, *A History of the Church* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 412.

⁶⁷ Franzen, 406.

⁶⁸ Franzen, 407. Pope Paul VI adopted the term ‘Christ’s Mystical Body’ from Pius XII. Paul VI, “*Mysterium Fidei*,” 9 March 1965, para. 70, accessed 1 October 2020, Vatican.va. Pius XII, “*Mystici Corporis Christi*,” 29 June 1943, accessed 10 January 2020, Vatican.va.

⁶⁹ George Weigel, *City of Saints. A Pilgrimage to John Paul II’s Kraków* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2015), 2.

⁷⁰ Strassberg, “Polish Catholicism in Transition,” 192.

at baptism,⁷¹ and the ‘second’⁷² or ‘continual conversion’,⁷³ which represents a daily challenge and task for a Christian on the path of holiness to follow Christ and adhere to Him. In order to understand our chosen saint *from within*, this chapter will use concrete examples to show how continual conversion manifested itself as an aspect of holiness in the life of this personality.

Karol was baptised one month after his birth at his local church, now called the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Szulc informs us that the Wojtyła household was ‘very religious, but not oppressively.’⁷⁴ During his childhood, his mother gave him a solid basis for his faith, but she died when Karol was eight years old. Just four years later, Karol’s older brother Edmund, a physician, died after contracting scarlet fever in the course of his medical work. Kolinski believes that his father, a retired officer, did not remarry so that he could devote himself entirely to the upbringing of his sons, including the transmission of a spiritual life.⁷⁵ From his father’s example, Karol learned how to accept difficult life situations. At Edmund’s funeral, his father kept ‘repeating the words “Thy will be done!”’⁷⁶ Karol’s conversion therefore reflected a high degree of trust in God, even from such a young age, when despite the death of loved ones, he did not turn away from God but rather stayed even closer to Him, particularly through the veneration of the Virgin Mary. In his youth, Karol’s spiritual growth continued to be mainly influenced by his father. The later Pope would write: ‘[My father was] a deeply religious man. Day after day I was able to observe the austere way in which he lived ... his life became one of constant prayer.’⁷⁷ Weigel adds that ‘his father’s example and teaching also planted in his son the idea, which he would later develop as a priest and bishop, that all Christian living begins with radical conversion to Christ.’⁷⁸ His father took him to the

⁷¹ The dogmatic constitution states that ‘In the baptism of faith [believers] truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy ... for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church.’ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November 1964, para. 40, accessed 10 January 2020, Vatican.va.

⁷² The Catechism states that ‘Christ’s call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, “clasping sinners to her bosom, (is) at once holy and always in need of purification, (and) follows constantly the path of penance and renewal” (LG 8)’ Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.d., para. 1428, accessed 10 October 2020, Vatican.va.

⁷³ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 35.

⁷⁴ Szulc, *Pope John Paul II. The Biography*, 61.

⁷⁵ Fr. Dennis Koliński SJC, “The Spirituality of Saint John Paul II,” n.d., 1, accessed 31 March 2021, https://www.academia.edu/37065365/THE_SPIRITUALITY_OF_SAINT_JOHN_PAUL_II.

⁷⁶ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 12.

⁷⁷ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, 15–16.

⁷⁸ Weigel, *City of Saints*, 29.

Marian sanctuaries at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska⁷⁹ and Częstochowa and so contributed to his growing Marian devotion. Karol also learned from his father the benefits of holding to a fixed schedule each day. After morning school, there would be time allocated to entertainment, spiritual life, homework, and evening or weekend walks, which they both loved very much.⁸⁰ A balanced order to the day, combined with love and spiritual formation from his father, certainly helped the future pope not only to build a strong character and connect everyday life with a deeply lived spirituality, but also to manage an enormous workload while remaining immersed in the presence of God. Hiking in the mountains with his father, and throughout his life, became an important hobby for Karol.⁸¹ The mountains provided a place for recharging his batteries and spending time in meditation.

From 1930 to 1938, Karol attended Wadowice High School and was among a group of the most able students. He gained a passion for Polish literature and language and, among other things, excellent knowledge of Greek and Latin. His love of words was reflected in his written work and in an intense interest in the theatre. He made his first appearance on stage in the autumn of 1934 in Wadowice:⁸² ‘In the theater, most of his chosen roles were mystical, religious, and patriotic. Wojtyła was a natural actor, a gift that would serve him well all his life.’⁸³ Wojtyła was also very popular with his classmates: ‘He was widely admired for his admixture of seriousness and religiosity with friendliness, a fine sense of humour and involvement in activities ranging from sports and military basic training in the Academic Legion to amateur theatre and intensive school homework.’⁸⁴ Regarding the development of his spiritual vocation, ‘Dr. Jan Kuś, a classmate, remembers that when they reached the seventh year of high school – the penultimate year – Karol’s friend began asking him, in earnest, whether he planned to become a priest. No, he replied, *Non sum dignus* (I am not worthy).’⁸⁵ Later, Wojtyła mentioned that even when he started university, he was still planning only to be an active lay faithful rather than a priest.⁸⁶ In 1935 he became a member of the high school Marian group: ‘The brotherhood was devoted to the cult of Mary – hence Marian Sodality – and

⁷⁹ Szulc, *Pope John Paul II. The Biography*, 63.

⁸⁰ Szulc, 64–65.

⁸¹ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 13.

⁸² Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 16.

⁸³ Szulc, *Pope John Paul II. The Biography*, 18.

⁸⁴ Szulc, 76.

⁸⁵ Szulc, 76–77.

⁸⁶ Szulc, 77.

Karol's attraction to it may have flowed from the memory of his mother. In time, his veneration of Mary became absolute.⁸⁷

One important figure in Wojtyła's youth was Father Kazimier Figlewicz, his 'confessor and spiritual director'⁸⁸ at Wadowice parish church and the person who did most to shape and deepen his religious life, encouraging him into participation in the liturgy and service at the altar.⁸⁹ Every morning before school, Wojtyła would run to the church for morning prayer and to take communion.⁹⁰ Father Figlewicz later moved to the Wawel Cathedral in Krakow, where Wojtyła continued to meet with him, taking on his mentor's great love for the cathedral that would later become his seat as bishop.⁹¹ The routines and attitudes learned and gained in his family, school and parish environments all contributed to Wojtyła's sincere attachment to Christ. In Wadowice, too, first from his father and then at school, Wojtyła discovered his love of Polish literature, language and theatre, and as such was a true Pole: 'While other European Romantics rejected Christianity root and branch, Polish Romanticism embraced Christianity as one of the essential seeds from which the unique reality of "Poland" had grown.'⁹²

In 1938, Wojtyła moved to Krakow with his father, setting up residence at Tyniecka 10 in the district of Dębniki (across the river from the Wawel Cathedral), and enrolling as a student of Polish studies at the Faculty of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University. The next ten years would play a crucial role in his spiritual development. Wojtyła had barely begun his life as a student when war broke out, the university was closed, and he was forced to study in secret. He had already begun to write plays, and at one of his poetry recitals in 1938 had 'publicly declared his intention of becoming an actor.'⁹³ When his father died in 1941, Wojtyła invited the actor and theatre director Mieczysław Kotlarczyk and his family to move in with him. He had met Kotlarczyk during his school years in Wadowice and then later in 1938 at the *Living Word Theater*, where his new mentor 'helped him to refine his diction, fine-tune his timing, and improve his rapport with the audience.'⁹⁴ His theatrical experience would prove valuable for his later mission as bishop and pope.

⁸⁷ Szulc, 76.

⁸⁸ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, 20.

⁸⁹ John Paul II, 20.

⁹⁰ Szulc, *Pope John Paul II. The Biography*, 76.

⁹¹ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, 20.

⁹² Weigel, *City of Saints*, 32–33.

⁹³ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 19.

⁹⁴ Oder and Gaeta, 19.

Wojtyła's spiritual development continued in Krakow at the Salesian parish church of St Stanislaus Kostka,⁹⁵ where he met Jan Tyranowski, a tailor by profession, who cared for the 'spiritual formation of young people' and led the Marian group 'The Living Rosary'.⁹⁶ Tyranowski taught the young Wojtyła 'the basic methods of self-formation which would later be confirmed and developed in the seminary program', and introduced him to (and helped him understand) the works of the Carmelites St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Ávila.⁹⁷ Interestingly, these and other saints who inspired him, such as St Thérèse of Lisieux,⁹⁸ St Louis de Montfort and St Sister Faustyna Kowalská, would all be considered by spiritual theology as mystics, as would Mother Teresa of Kolkata, whom Pope John Paul II beatified in 2003. This inclination towards the mystical can be seen as part of his conversion, deepening his union with Christ.

A major step forward in his life in union with Christ comes during the Second World War. With the country occupied by the Nazis and the university closed, Wojtyła's studies continued in secret. He made ends meet by working first at the limestone quarry in Zakrzówek near his home in Krakow, and then at the Solvay chemical plant.⁹⁹ Although he was fascinated by the theatre, he had a decision to make: theatre or the priesthood? In October 1942, he began studying as a seminarian in secret courses at the Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University. In March 1943 'he [made] his last appearance on the stage, as the star of the Juliusz Slowacki play Samuel Zborowski.'¹⁰⁰ His decision for the priestly vocation matured as the war progressed. The conversion and spiritual life of the Polish artist Adam Chmielowski, later Saint Brother Albert, who died in 1916, had considerable influence on Wojtyła. Chmielowski's conversion saw him switch from a love of art to living a life of poverty and helping the poorest of the poor.¹⁰¹ Remembering his life as Brother Albert, the later pope noted that 'at a certain point of his life, this man abandoned his artistic pursuits because he realized that God was calling him to much more important tasks ... [His] inspiring example of sacrifice attracted many followers ... [and] two religious congregations devoted to the poorest were born'.¹⁰² Such an example

⁹⁵ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, 18.

⁹⁶ John Paul II, 19.

⁹⁷ John Paul II, 19.

⁹⁸ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 4.

⁹⁹ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, 16–17. 'The vast Solvay chemical works in the Borek Fałęcki district of Kraków no longer exist; the area once occupied by the plants where Karol Wojtyła worked during the Second World War is now home to shopping malls and a large movie complex. One of the old Solvay building remains, directly alongside the road to Zakopane.' Weigel, *City of Saints*, 101.

¹⁰⁰ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 182.

¹⁰¹ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, 24–26.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 25. Pope John Paul II canonised Brother Albert in 1989.

played an obvious role in Wojtyła's decision-making regarding the kind of life he would eventually say 'yes' to. Chmielowski was close to him on the human level in that he was also an avid artist, but the Pope presents us with conversion as a sacrifice after realising and perceiving the will of God in some matter or on life's path. There is an essential theological link here regarding conversion, which occurs in his encyclicals and will be discussed in chapter 4 of this study. Sacrifice for God can be perceived as something negative – one must give something up and it often 'hurts'. However, sacrifice also has a positive dimension, namely a benefit for the person whose life with God is deepening and improving, and at the same time a benefit for others. Here the Pope presents the conversion of Chmielowski as a positive sacrifice for God, which is attractive to others. Sacrifice has its highest pattern in Jesus, who sacrificed himself for the salvation of the world (Mk. 10:45; Eph. 5:2).

As a result of his spiritual formation by Tyranowski, Wojtyła became so fascinated by Carmelite spirituality that he considered joining the Carmelite order,¹⁰³ but recalls that 'my uncertainties were resolved by the Archbishop, Cardinal Sapieha, who in his typical manner said tersely: "First you have to finish what you have begun." And that is what happened.'¹⁰⁴ In August 1944, Archbishop Sapieha housed Wojtyła and other secret seminarians at the Archbishop's Palace in Krakow and had considerable influence on his theological studies and spiritual formation. Although Wojtyła did not join the Carmelites, he deepened his interest in Carmelite spirituality and worked on a thesis on St John of the Cross. In addition to the influence of people such as the rector Father Jan Piwowarczyk and the professor of moral theology Father Wladyslaw Wicher, several things can be described as steps on Wojtyła's theological and spiritual path: long walks, meditations, and research into the writings of St Thomas Aquinas, especially during the summer vacation Wojtyła spent in Raciborowice,¹⁰⁵ where he began his thesis on the Carmelites. On 1 November 1946, All Saints' Day, Wojtyła was ordained priest in Cardinal Sapieha's private chapel. Shortly afterwards, he was sent to Rome to continue his studies at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas, where in June 1948 he defended his doctoral thesis on *The Doctrine of Faith According to St. John of the Cross*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ John Paul II, 19.

¹⁰⁴ John Paul II, 19.

¹⁰⁵ John Paul II, 12–13.

¹⁰⁶ Karol Wojtyła, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981). The original text is '*Doctrina de fide apud S. Joannem a Cruce*'. For a useful insight into the main issues in the thesis, see Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 105–9.

The period from 1948 until his election as pope in 1978 is characterised by a rich and outstanding life of pastoral activity, the development of further education, pedagogical and scientific activity, and intensive work in the church structures. From June 1948, Wojtyła worked as assistant parish priest in the parish of Niegowić, and from August 1949 in the parish of St Floriana in Krakow.¹⁰⁷ From October 1953, he taught Catholic social ethics at the Faculty of Theology of the Jagiellonian University, before taking up professorial positions at the Krakow Seminary and from 1957 at the Catholic University of Lublin.¹⁰⁸ Notable steps on his upward trajectory in the church hierarchy included his election as bishop in 1958, as archbishop of Krakow in 1963, and as cardinal in 1967 at the behest of Pope Paul VI. Wojtyła participated in all four sessions of the Second Vatican Council between 1962 and 1965.¹⁰⁹ His publications from this period include *Love and Responsibility* (1960) and *The Acting Person* (1969). In 1972, he put his participation in the preparation of some Council documents to excellent use in the book *Sources of Renewal*,¹¹⁰ in which he elaborated on some of the Council proceedings.

What contributed to his life of union with Christ during this period? And what can be identified as an example of personal conversion in his daily life? At the church in Niegowić, he deepened his relationship with Christ through ‘extraordinary Eucharistic devotion, which was manifested in long sessions of adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. It was not uncommon for Wojtyła to spend part of the night in prayer before the altar, stretched out on the floor, his arms spread in the sign of the cross.’¹¹¹ This was a period of rich pastoral activity on behalf of students, young couples and all the faithful in his diocese. Oder mentions that Wojtyła found an inspiring example of pastoral work in St Stanisław and St Charles Borromeo.¹¹²

On 16 October 1978, Cardinal Karol Wojtyła became Pope John Paul II, the 263rd Roman Bishop of St Peter and the first Slavic pope in the history of the Church. In what follows, we will focus more on his personal piety than on snapshots from his life as this will show more precisely the detail of his path of holiness, which is the intention of this reflection.

¹⁰⁷ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 34, 183.

¹⁰⁸ Oder and Gaeta, 183–84.

¹⁰⁹ Oder and Gaeta, 184.

¹¹⁰ Karol Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II), *Sources of Renewal. The Implementation of the Second Vatican Council*, Revised ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

¹¹¹ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 35.

¹¹² Oder and Gaeta, 43.

The life and spirituality of John Paul II bears witness to both *the universal call to holiness* (LG 39–42),¹¹³ to which all Christians are called, and to the concrete example of holiness in the priestly vocation. In 1996, on the 50th anniversary of his priesting, the Pope described the outworkings of his decision for the priestly vocation in his book *Gift and Mystery*.¹¹⁴ He considers this vocation a ‘mystery’ and a ‘gift’ which ‘infinitely transcends the individual’, and refers to Jn. 15:16 when describing his sense of ‘divine election’.¹¹⁵ The Christian vocation relates to the spiritual life, so it will be helpful to focus on those elements that significantly contributed to the development of his spirituality and union with God. Among such moments he includes his time as a seminarian when he was studying and preparing for the priesthood, as well as ‘a number of other situations and individuals [who] had a positive influence on me, and that God was using ... to make his voice heard.’¹¹⁶ In his introduction to *Gift and Mystery*, Miloslav Cardinal Vlk (archbishop of Prague, 1991–2010) states that ‘the chapters that open to the reader are a subtle key to understanding the Pope’s life, his heart, his wide openness and dialogue, as well as his firm grounding in the Lord and under the protection of the Virgin Mary, who soon takes the place of mother in his life.’¹¹⁷

One highly important strand of his spirituality is the Marian dimension, which developed gradually from his childhood when he became a member of the Marian group in Wadowice. Oder even believes that his relationship with the Virgin Mary began at birth, when the Marian evening devotion from the parish was being sung. O’Connor suggests that John Paul’s devotion to Mary ‘has some characteristic traits and emphases deriving from four factors that have contributed notably to it: Czestochowa, St. Louis de Montfort, Vatican II and Fatima.’¹¹⁸

How did this Marian devotion contribute to his attachment to Christ? He developed and deepened his relationship with the Virgin Mary through the whole of his life, especially during his papacy, and it became a key dimension of his spiritual life and mission. He followed Jesus’ words from the cross, as we read in the Gospel of John: ‘Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said to his mother,

¹¹³ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*.

¹¹⁴ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*.

¹¹⁵ John Paul II, 2.

¹¹⁶ John Paul II, 15.

¹¹⁷ Jan Pavel II, *Dar a tajemství. K padesátému výročí mého kněžství* (Praha: Nové Město, 1997), 6 (my translation).

¹¹⁸ Edward D. O’Connor, “The Roots of Pope John Paul II’s Devotion to Mary,” *Marian Studies* 39, no. 12 (1988): 83.

“He is your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “She is your mother.” From that time the disciple took her to live in his home’ (Jn. 19:26-27). During his pontificate, he made numerous pilgrimages to sites of Marian devotion across the world. He fostered his personal piety to the Virgin Mary, entrusting her with prayers for particular people, for the Church, and for the whole world, and deepening his veneration through unceasing prayer and meditation: ‘The intensity and the rapt concentration with which he addressed Mary conferred upon the Pope, in the eyes of those who observed him, an almost supernatural aura.’¹¹⁹

John Paul II also followed Jesus in his sufferings. He lost members of his family and close friends, was hit by a car in his youth, suffered numerous illnesses and accidents, underwent several operations, and endured serious health problems such as Parkinson’s disease, which made his life very difficult. Yet it is precisely in these events, and how he accepted them with humility and immeasurable perseverance, that he continued, in his own spiritual exercises and in his work in the papacy, to witness to the world his imitation of Christ and to demonstrate his journey along the path of holiness.

Christian conversion includes the important aspect of forgiveness. In John Paul’s case, we find this aspect very clearly in his response to Mehmet Ali Agca, the would-be assassin who attempted to shoot him in St Peter’s Square on 13 May 1981, and whom the Pope later visited in prison, an act that provoked no little criticism. However, this visible demonstration of the Pope’s attitude to a life of continual conversion reminds us of the words Jesus spoke to Peter to illustrate the nature of the kingdom of God: ‘Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?” “No, not seven times,” answered Jesus, “but seventy times seven”.’ (Mt. 18:21-22) Jesus told his disciples that in order to receive the forgiveness of the Father, they must forgive one another (Mt. 6:14-15). Whatever the opinion of the world, in his response to the man who tried to kill him, as in so much else in his life, John Paul was enacting the appeal of St Paul from the letter to the Romans: ‘Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God – what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.’ (Rom. 12:2)

In addition to his relationship to the Virgin Mary, the Pope developed a deep sense of veneration for the saints. Why did such profound veneration become an integral part of

¹¹⁹ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 166.

his personal piety? There are two equally important aspects to consider. One relates to the saints by whom he was especially inspired and indeed shaped from the time of his childhood, through his youth, and for the rest of his life. The other relates to the large number of personalities he blessed and canonised. The personal and ecclesial dimensions of his veneration of the saints intertwined and indeed were complementary, as Oder explains: ‘In two large files, which he kept in his bedroom, he had the biographies of each of those saints and blessed, and he often spent time reading and rereading them to find inspiration for the practice of the virtues.’¹²⁰

As a young man, John Paul showed great sensitivity and respect for the saints and drew from them inspiration for his journey on the path of holiness. During his early days in Krakow with his father, he found spiritual inspiration and help in the book *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* by St Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort.¹²¹ This French saint greatly influenced him and helped him to find a genuine relationship with and better understanding of the Virgin Mary: ‘Yes, Mary does bring us closer to Christ; she does lead us to him, provided that we live her mystery in Christ ... And so, thanks to Saint Louis, I began to discover the immense riches of Marian devotion from new perspectives’.¹²² His well-known motto ‘Totus Tuus’ (All yours) comes from St Louis, as he explains: ‘It is an abbreviation of a more complete form of entrustment to the Mother of God which runs like this: *Totus Tuus ego sum et omnia mea Tua sunt. Accipio Te in mea omnia. Praebe mihi cor Tuum, Maria*’.¹²³ The inspiration helped him to practise a spirituality that was ‘fundamental in shaping that journey of prayer and contemplation’ and helped him mature as a person and as a priest.¹²⁴ In addition to the Marian aspect, what else links John Paul II to St Louis? Among other things, two characteristics of life and spirituality can be captured: the existential likeness of Christ through the cross, and the mystical character of life. Though a wealthy nobleman, St Louis followed Christ’s example and lived a life of poverty that began when he was able to give himself entirely to God, giving up everything he had, including his clothes and all his money.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Oder and Gaeta, 172.

¹²¹ Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort, *Traité de la vraie dévotion à la sainte Vierge* (Montréal: Religieux du T.S. Sacrement, Couvent des RR. PP. Dominicains, 1896); St Louis Marie de Montfort, *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary* (Bay Shore: The Montfort Father’s Publications, 1987).

¹²² John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, 23.

¹²³ John Paul II, 23. The Latin can be rendered ‘I am all yours, and everything I have is yours. I take you for my all. O Mary, give me your heart.’

¹²⁴ John Paul II, 24.

¹²⁵ Borriello Luigi ... [et al.] (eds.), *Slovník křesťanských mystiků* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2012), 517.

Throughout his life, Karol Wojtyła / Pope John Paul II also followed Christ in a life of poverty, although this aspect was not so much in the public eye. The postulator Oder elaborates on this way of life in his chapter on John Paul II the mystic:

It was not easy to give him a gift. For the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of his consecration as a bishop, the diocesan prefects had decided not to give him money, because they knew he would immediately distribute any sums he received. Anyone who gave him an envelope with a cash offering could be sure that the archbishop, without even opening it, would immediately hand it over to the curia treasurer—that is, if it didn't wind up directly in the hands of a poor person first.¹²⁶

In his private life, his approach to poverty was even more deeply lived:

Those who were in charge of clothing him at the time remembered that Wojtyła always wore very modest apparel and refused to replace it, even when it was quite tattered. If a hole appeared, he demanded that it be patched or darned. He owned only a single overcoat, with a lining that he inserted in the winter and removed in spring and autumn.¹²⁷

Continual, daily conversion is always first a matter of God's grace, followed by an internal decision and an external manifestation. From the above examples, it can be inferred that conversion, which means 'change of mind' (Greek *Metanoia*),¹²⁸ also involves a strengthening of one's attitude and the need to take practical steps. The Christian's task is to follow the path of holiness, to keep improving as one does so, and to live according to the gospel and Christ's example: 'To build and develop holiness in everyday life' (LG 41). Wojtyła/John Paul performed certain mental, spiritual, and physical acts that brought him closer to Christ and deepened his union with him. The ways in which his spiritual and daily life demonstrated the path of holiness are so numerous as to require that we focus on some specific and outstanding character. Several major dimensions of his spirituality could help us paint a picture of his life of holiness – his pastoral work, his active opposition to totalitarian regimes and their denial of freedoms – but in the next section we will concentrate on one: the idea of following Christ by going out to people.

¹²⁶ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 138–139.

¹²⁷ Oder and Gaeta, 139.

¹²⁸ John D. Barry (ed.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), accessed 10 March 2021, <https://www.logos.com/product/36564/lexham-bible-dictionary>.

1.4. The Idea of Following Christ: Going Out to People

Following Christ as the path of holiness is the central axis and essence of Christianity. The idea has many different layers and interpretations and both a personal and an ecclesial dimension. Following Christ is done ‘in a community revived by the [Holy] Spirit’.¹²⁹ Jesus’ invitation to follow him connects our daily response to God with the eschatological hope of eternal life: ‘If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget self, carry his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his own life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it’ (Mt. 16:24). From the perspective of spiritual theology:

The follower is responsible in the Church and for the Church, and supports the mutual union of its members, carries out its mission by his/her own share. To think with the Church, to want it, to experience it the way Jesus Christ wants it, to go where Jesus Christ goes and where he leads it, these are the crucial moments of following.¹³⁰

Following Christ is expressed in *the universal call to holiness*, which means knowing the Son and seeking a more perfect union with Him. However, it is not a matter of human effort alone, as the Council Fathers remind us:

The followers of Christ are called by God, not because of their works, but according to His own purpose and grace.... They must follow in His footsteps and conform themselves to His image, seeking the will of the Father in all things. They must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor (LG 40).

The path of Christ’s disciple focused on *the universal call to holiness* has an unmerited character – it is a gift from God (LG 40). Several aspects of the concept of discipleship, including the verbs ‘follow’ (*sequi*), ‘serve’ (*ministrare*) and ‘conform’ (*conformare*), link to the idea of Jesus as the Master Spiritual Model. As Weigel points out: ‘To put it in a single word: to understand Karol Wojtyła “from inside” is to understand him as a disciple.’¹³¹

¹²⁹ Stefano De Fiore and Tullo Goffi, eds., “Následování (following),” in *Slovník spirituality* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1999), 570.

¹³⁰ De Fiore and Goffi, 570.

¹³¹ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 10. Discussing the etymology of the word ‘disciple’, the Lexham Bible Dictionary states that ‘at the time of Jesus, the Greek term for disciple usually referred to an adherent of a great teacher or master. “Disciple” (μαθητής, mathētēs) derives from the verb “to learn” (μανθάνειν, manthanein). In the early classical period, it was used of a “learner” in a general sense, such as an “adherent”

Regarding the notion of following Christ, of discipleship, two key lines appear in the life and spirituality of John Paul II. They are the anthropological line and the Christological line, and they intertwine with each other. The first line represents the human side of John Paul II: his interpersonal relationships and his extraordinary interest in and care for people. The second, Christological line relates to his vocation to the priesthood, which he considers ‘a gift’ and ‘a mystery’.¹³² It is a crucial line that developed from the time he decided to accept his vocation to his becoming one of the most popular and sought-after shepherds that ever rose through the ranks of the Church hierarchy.

Weigel’s biography, which makes a clear connection between the anthropological and Christological character of the Pope’s life as a disciple of Christ, presents with immense care and detail the extensive activities and involvement of the Holy Father in events in the world and the Church.¹³³ In the second-longest of all pontificates¹³⁴ Pope John Paul II undertook 104 foreign trips (in addition to more than 140 pastoral trips in Italy), visiting 129 countries.¹³⁵ Oder calculated that the Pope spent 822 days outside the Vatican, ‘[a figure] equivalent to 8.5 percent of his entire pontificate.’¹³⁶ His extensive travel did not go uncriticised, however.

Why did the Pope travel so much? Oder suggests that the Pope took his model from the missionary journeys of St Paul and indeed the travels made by his predecessor Paul VI.¹³⁷ John Paul II himself used to comment: ‘I am traveling as a teacher of faith, but also as a disciple to learn about the life of the local churches.’¹³⁸ He did not stay locked up in the Vatican but followed Christ in going out to the people as a true shepherd. The evangelist tells us that ‘Jesus went round visiting all the towns and villages. He taught in the synagogues, preached the Good News about the Kingdom, and healed the people with every kind of disease and sickness’ (Mt. 9:35). Jesus gave a clear call to all Christians to

of a great teacher or teaching, or more technically as an “institutional pupil” of the Sophists. In the late Hellenistic period, the term was still in use.’ John D. Barry, ed., “Disciple,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, n.d.), <https://app.logos.com/>.

¹³² John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*.

¹³³ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*.

¹³⁴ Walsh, “Pope John Paul II and His Canonizations,” 415. Pius IX was the longest-serving Pope (1846–1878).

¹³⁵ “Viaggi Apostolici del Santo Padre Sua Santità Giovanni Paolo II. Statistiche,” 13 January 2005, accessed 10 March 2021, Vatican.va.

¹³⁶ The figure excludes stays in hospital and summer visits to Castel Gandolfo. Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 103.

¹³⁷ Oder and Gaeta, 103.

¹³⁸ Oder and Gaeta, 103.

go out into the whole world, to help others become disciples, and to proclaim the kingdom of God (Mt. 28:18-20). John Paul II fulfilled this *gift* and *task* on a global scale.

1.5. Conclusion

This reflection on the life and spirituality of St John Paul II set out to explore the steps he took along the Christian path of holiness, and what he did to follow Christ and continually adhere to Him. In line with the approach of spiritual theology, the study also took into consideration his appeal to *understand him from within*.

First, the theme of holiness was introduced with a reflection on the number of people the Pope beatified and canonised, contributing to their memory in the liturgy and thus commemorating their testimony and their life journeys with God. Walsh suggested that the large number of canonisations and the people chosen for that honour were each a function of the Pope's extensive travels. This can certainly be argued, but we could equally suggest that through his approach the Pope was manifesting his sense of belonging to and with the people, his closeness to them; that by making saints of their neighbours, he was highlighting the humanity of the whole human race; and that through the 'canonised path' he was demonstrating the 'uncanonised' path of holiness for everyone.

The reasons for John Paul II's own canonisation were then presented. His continual adherence to Christ was viewed through his discovery of his vocation to the priesthood, his inspiration by the saints and application of their virtues in his own life, and the significant Marian dimension which contributed to the formation of his spirituality and his life's journey with God. He was a man of constant prayer. Other significant aspects of his personality and life were highlighted: his life of personal poverty; the importance he placed on forgiveness, even for those who attack or persecute us; and his bearing of illness throughout his life and at the end of it, which provided a strong testimony of Christ to the world. His personal holiness came from the life he lived. This is a new view of holiness: holiness as humanity that bears the authentic witness of holiness. This pope showed that the ordinary humanity of every person becomes extraordinary in a life lived as a follower of Christ.

2. An Initial Perspective: The Teaching of the Second Vatican Council

The initial perspective on holiness is based largely on two texts of the Second Vatican Council. This will enable reflection on the Council's stance towards holiness. The first text is chapter V of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, which deals with 'the Universal Call to Holiness in the Church'.¹³⁹ This passage plays a vital role in Pope John Paul II's commitment to bringing holiness deeply into the life of every Christian and the Church. The second text, part of the constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, focuses on the conciliar view of the human person, particularly the wholeness of a person and their grounding in Jesus Christ.

This introductory perspective on holiness will therefore consider humanity as something that is not only natural but also, as a result of Christ's redemption of humankind, supernatural. The reflection on the selected texts will provide methodological support for the approach to holiness that is taken in this study and the terminology used.

2.1. The Universal Call to Holiness in *Lumen Gentium*

This section reflects on the conciliar approach to holiness as found in chapter V of *Lumen Gentium*. An insight into the biblical meaning of the words *holiness* and *holy* will illustrate the nature of holiness presented by the Council. A consideration of the roots of Karol Wojtyła's conception of holiness will also make a key contribution. The reflection opens up further questions for research.

2.1.1. The Conciliar Approach to Holiness

Before the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which was convened by Pope John XXIII and completed by Pope Paul VI, the concept of holiness was applied mainly to the clergy. The lay faithful tended to be perceived as those who were to live a pious life and avoid sin. From the early days of the Church, the understanding and realisation of holiness

¹³⁹ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 39–42.

were both based largely on the monastic life:¹⁴⁰ the religious provided the pattern for a holy life.

The Council Fathers address holiness in various documents and specific contexts, but the topic receives special attention in chapter V of *Lumen Gentium*, which addresses the universal call to holiness and links it to the eschatological dimension in chapter VII. Similarly, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS), a pastoral document concerning the Church in today's world, explores the concepts of 'holiness' and 'perfection', two terms which can be distinguished but also considered as synonyms. Before looking at the insights from *Lumen Gentium*, it will be beneficial to note where the theme of holiness can be found in other Council documents and to define the initial research perspective. *Christus Dominus*¹⁴¹ and *Presbyterorum Ordinis*,¹⁴² documents which concern the ministry of, respectively, bishops and priests, present the path of holiness as the path of perfection. A considerable emphasis on the appeal to holiness can also be found in the documents on the lay apostolate *Apostolicam Actuositatem*¹⁴³ and on the mission of the Church *Ad Gentes*.¹⁴⁴ Historically and theologically, one further document that refers to LG and holiness is the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* (PC), which is devoted to the religious life,¹⁴⁵ and whose foundation lies in the attainment of holiness as the perfection of love through the Gospel counsels represented by 'chastity, poverty and obedience' (PC 1). The leading and recurring emphasis here is on two important terms in relation to holiness, namely 'adaptation' and 'renewal': 'The adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time. This renewal, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church must be advanced' (PC 2) within the conditions the Decree specifies for this particular vocation.

Before its declaration of the universal call to holiness in chapter V, *Lumen Gentium* also deals with doctrines relating to Christian life in the context of specific calls, such as the vocations to bishop, priest and deacon in chapter III (LG 18–29), the religious in

¹⁴⁰ On the fundamentals and development of the religious life, see Karl Suso Frank, *With Greater Liberty: A Short History of Christian Monasticism and Religious Orders*, trans. Joseph T. Lienhard, Cistercian Studies Series 144 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1993).

¹⁴¹ Vatican Council II, *Christus Dominus*, 28 October 1965, accessed 10 January 2020, Vatican.va.

¹⁴² Vatican Council II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7 December 1965, accessed 10 January 2020, Vatican.va.

¹⁴³ Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 18 November 1965, accessed 10 January 2020, Vatican.va.

¹⁴⁴ Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes*, 7 December 1965, accessed 10 January 2020, Vatican.va.

¹⁴⁵ Vatican Council II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 28 October 1965, accessed 10 January 2020, Vatican.va.

chapter VI (LG 43–47), and the laity in chapter IV (LG 30–38). But, as O’Malley observes, ‘Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of *Lumen Gentium* is chapter five, “The Call to Holiness.” *Lumen Gentium* thus set the agenda, leading the way for the call to holiness to become one of the great themes running through the council.’¹⁴⁶

How should we view Christian holiness through the lens of the universal call as presented by the Second Vatican Council? Speaking about the fundamental features of the conciliar interpretation of holiness, Christopher Butler, one of the key Council Fathers,¹⁴⁷ insisted that the Council had to go back ‘to the biblical theology which governs the first two chapters of the Constitution on the Church’¹⁴⁸ and presents the Church as the people of God (LG 1–17). This is in line with Pesch, who also considers the question of holiness in the context of the unity of the Church as ‘the people of God’:

The first thing to notice is that the Council did not speak of the unity of the Church using the classical schema presented in the Creed: one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. There is actually no separate discussion of these four descriptors; all four are treated when the context demands it: holiness in Chapter 5 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, under the title “The General Call to Holiness in the Church.”¹⁴⁹

Pesch also believes that ‘the Church is not the “light of the nations” (*lumen gentium*) – although John XXIII had expressed himself almost exactly like this – *Christ* is.’¹⁵⁰

The universal call to holiness, as presented in LG chapter V para. 39–42, provides a ‘description of holiness’ rather than a definition.¹⁵¹ O’Malley sums up the conciliar interpretation of holiness succinctly: ‘Holiness, the council thus said, is what the church

¹⁴⁶ John W. Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 50–51.

¹⁴⁷ Basil Christopher Butler OSB (1902–1986): ‘English, convert from Anglicanism, ordained in 1933. Abbot of Downside from 1946–1966, president of the Congregation of English Benedictines from 1961 to 1966, auxiliary bishop of Westminster from 1966 until his death. Member of the Doctrinal Commission, elected during the second session.’ Henri Cardinal de Lubac, *Vatican Council Notebooks. I* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), 84. Butler was ‘one of maybe two dozen “men who made the Council”.’ See Michael Novak (ed.), *The Men Who Make the Council* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 16 (in the chapter by Valentine Rice: ‘Dom Christopher Butler, The Abbot of Downside’)

¹⁴⁸ Bishop B.C. Butler, *Searchings*. edited with an Introduction by Valentine Rice (London: Geoffrey Chapman: 1974), 255.

¹⁴⁹ Otto Hermann Pesch, *Second Vatican Council: Prehistory – Event – Results – Posthistory*, Marquette Studies in Theology 82 (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2014), 193.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 156. Despite this clear Christological stance, Pesch can be considered a relatively liberal author whose primary goal was to understand what was new in the conciliar teaching and how it broke with tradition. He has been criticised for having a one-sided view of the Council. The Council documents must, rather, be read as a whole; all the statements belong together.

¹⁵¹ Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi, *Le Cause dei Santi. Sussidio per lo Studium*, Terza Edizione (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2014), 20.

is all about.’¹⁵² LG chapter V explains how to attain holiness and why it is so important for a Christian. The description is essentially linked to chapter VII where hope is concentrated and accomplished in the eschatological dimension of eternal life in God’s presence (para. 48–51).¹⁵³ O’Malley points out some differences between the terminology used for holiness in LG and that used in previous councils: ‘The call to holiness is something more than external conformity to enforceable codes of conduct. It is a call that, though it must have external form, relates more directly to the higher impulses of the human spirit, which in the council often got specified in commitment to the service of others in the world’.¹⁵⁴ McBrien offers a helpful analysis of how the constitution developed.¹⁵⁵ The first proposal presented a brief overview of the state of evangelical perfection and the laity. The second draft already contained a separate chapter on the vocation to holiness. In the final text, this chapter, now chapter V, applies the call to holiness to the whole Church and all Christian life states. Chapter VI deals in more detail with the religious life and how the Gospel counsels relate to it.¹⁵⁶

The Council expanded the scope of the Church’s view of holiness to include the laity to a much greater degree: holiness can be achieved in all vocations; the vocations may vary, but holiness does not (LG 41). The Council stresses that Christians ‘are justified in the Lord Jesus, because in the baptism of faith they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy.’ Flanagan calls this ‘the baptismal call to holiness’.¹⁵⁷

The noun ‘holiness’ and the adjective ‘holy’ cover various concepts and meanings in both Christian and non-Christian contexts. Interpretations of the term are influenced by the time and the cultural context. Exploring a biblical perspective on holiness will help in interpreting and understanding some mainstream views on the subject and the view of the Council. Such an exploration will necessarily involve an analysis of Hebrew and Greek expressions for holiness. In *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Cunningham defines holiness as ‘the state of being set apart for religious purposes or

¹⁵² O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 51.

¹⁵³ A progression of the way chapters V and VII are arranged is offered, for example in Pesch, *Second Vatican Council*, 139–140.

¹⁵⁴ O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 51.

¹⁵⁵ Richard P. McBrien, “The Church (Lumen Gentium),” in *Contemporary Catholic Theology – A Reader* (New York: The Continuum Publ., 1999), 279–293.

¹⁵⁶ McBrien, 280, 281, 284.

¹⁵⁷ See Brian P. Flanagan, “The Universal Call to Holiness and Laity in the Church,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 32, no. 2 (2016): 219–32, here 219.

being consecrated for God.’¹⁵⁸ He adds that ‘the Holy is absolutely different; it is *mysterium*.’¹⁵⁹ This definition is in line with the Catechism, which states that ‘the holiness of God is the inaccessible center of his eternal mystery.’¹⁶⁰

Cunningham also offers an explanation regarding etymology:

The word holiness is derived from the Old English word *halignes*, meaning ‘without blemish or injury’. *Holy*, then, is an English equivalent for the Hebrew word *qds* and the Greek *hagios*, with both the Hebrew and the Greek having the added sense of separation or consecration.¹⁶¹

The Lexham Bible Dictionary extends the etymological analysis:

The English terms ‘holy’ and ‘holiness’ translate the biblical Hebrew word group *שִׁדָּשׁ* (*qdsh*), which can offer a variety of expressions such as ‘שִׁדָּשׁ (*qdash*), meaning ‘it is holy’; שִׁדָּשׁ (*qodesh*), referring to something ‘holy’; שִׁדָּשׁ (*qadesh*), which can serve as a place name, such as ‘sanctuary,’ ... שִׁדָּשׁ (*qadwsh*), meaning ‘holy’; שִׁדָּשׁ (*miqdash*), meaning ‘sanctuary’.¹⁶²

The same dictionary also notes the approach of the Septuagint:

[The LXX] usually translates the Hebrew terms for ‘holy’ with some form of the ἅγ (hag)–root. Thus, wherever the Hebrew Bible uses the שִׁדָּשׁ (*qdsh*) word group, the Septuagint uses Greek terms like ‘holy’ (ἅγιος, *hagios*) or ‘to be holy’ (ἁγιαζεῖν, *hagiazein*). The New Testament also uses the ἅγ (hag)–root to communicate the concept of holiness, especially when referencing the Old Testament background.¹⁶³

Cunningham notes a New Testament feature of the holy life, whereby ‘the holiness of Jesus is communicable to those who follow him, as John’s Gospel makes clear: “I consecrate (*hagiazō*, ‘make holy’) myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth” (Jn. 17:19).’¹⁶⁴ Jesus’ life and teaching, especially the Sermon on

¹⁵⁸ Lawrence S. Cunningham, “Holiness,” *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 479.

¹⁵⁹ Cunningham, 479.

¹⁶⁰ “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” para. 2809.

¹⁶¹ Cunningham, “Holiness,” 479.

¹⁶² John D. Barry, ed., “Holiness,” *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, n.d.), <https://app.logos.com/>.

¹⁶³ Barry.

¹⁶⁴ Cunningham, “Holiness,” 481. The Bible citation here comes from *The New American Bible* (Washington, D.C.: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 1970); *The New American Bible with Revised New Testament* (Washington, D.C.: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 1986). Cunningham further summarizes that in the Bible there are ‘three kinds of holiness which apply analogously to creatures but which are ultimately rooted in the holiness of God: 1) a priestly understanding that emphasises separation, purity, and

the Mount (see Mt. 5:3-12), are models for the lives of his followers, to whom he addresses the fundamental challenge of love: ‘I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love’ (Jn 15:9).

2.1.2. The Conciliar ‘aggiornamento’ and the Roots of Karol Wojtyła’s Conception of Holiness

In the introduction, I reflected on the possibility of viewing John Paul II’s interpretation of holiness as meaning union with Christ and the continual conversion of the Christian. Where might such an interpretation of holiness have its roots?

This brief overview of holiness as presented in chapter V of *Lumen Gentium* will begin with a consideration of Archbishop Wojtyła’s perspective on the subject. This will enable us to see whether later interpretations during his pontificate differ from his earlier views, and to make sure we do not confuse the reflections from his pre-papal and papal periods. For the purposes of exploring his conception of the theology of holiness, the pre-papal period can be divided into two sub-periods. The first is the pre-conciliar period, which paved the way for his teaching to be imprinted in the Council sessions and documents. Wojtyła began to develop his approach to holiness in the 1950s through his pastoral ministry among the lay faithful, which included providing spiritual guidance and support to students. Above all, through pastoral activity and the publication of *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* (in English *Love and Responsibility*)¹⁶⁵ he built a concept of holiness for married couples and reflected on the issues of marriage.

The second period includes the four years of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Pope John XXIII set the direction and characteristics of the Council by the so-called *aggiornamento*, which as Butler indicates, means ‘etymologically, “a bringing up to date”. The Church was to be brought up to date’.¹⁶⁶ Butler reflects on the needs of the times and of the Council and addresses the necessity of working with the question and

segregation for cult; 2) a prophetic understanding that underscores the relationship between worship, social justice, and conversion of heart; 3) a sapiential holiness that puts emphasis on the need for individual integrity as it develops under the eye of God.’ Cunningham, “Holiness,” 480.

¹⁶⁵ Karol Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność: studium etyczne* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1960); *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H.T. Willetts (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993).

¹⁶⁶ Butler, *Searchings*, 255. Skalický provides a comprehensive commentary on the development of the text of *Gaudium et Spes* and stresses that ‘one of the main factors in preparing for the Council’s “aggiornamento” (up-to-dateness; *zesoučasnění*) was undoubtedly a return to the sources of Christian faith and life, a return to the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers.’ (My translation.) Karel Skalický, *Radost a naděje. Církev v dnešním světě* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2000), 226.

task of *aggiornamento*: ‘The Church has a mission and a message, a divine help, for all mankind; to fulfil her function she must be not only chronologically but spiritually the contemporary of those to whom she addresses herself. *Aggiornamento* in depth is thus seen to be a pastoral necessity’.¹⁶⁷ *The aggiornamento* therefore fundamentally further determined and developed the pastoral focus of the Council. As O’Malley points out, the *aggiornamento* is ‘the most familiar change-word associated with Vatican II ... By admitting the change-principle the council implicitly admitted the open-ended character of its own pronouncements.’¹⁶⁸ Pesch, who appears to be more of a liberal author, also comments on the conciliar *aggiornamento*: ‘Above all it means the internal renewal of the Church, the renewal and revival of the faith and of the community life in the Church. Faith and Christian living should be a matter of today and not a beautiful tradition without formative power for the present and the future.’¹⁶⁹ Can the *aggiornamento* be applied to the theme of holiness and conversion, specifically with respect to chapter V of *Lumen Gentium*? And if so, how?

Karol Wojtyła was an active participant in the Second Vatican Council, first as bishop, and from 1963 as the archbishop of Krakow.¹⁷⁰ His intensive pastoral and intellectual efforts led to Wojtyła’s important pastoral-pedagogical projects that followed the Second Vatican Council. In 1970 Wojtyła completed a study, a sort of Council handbook, or as Weigel suggests, ‘a guided tour of the Council’s texts’.¹⁷¹ Called *U podstaw odnowy* in Polish,¹⁷² it was published in 1972, at the beginning of the Krakow Synod (1972–1979), the object of which, according to Adam Kubiś, was ‘to enrich the religious consciousness of the people of God and to form mature Christian attitudes, by studying the teaching of Vatican II and considering how best to implement it.’¹⁷³ Kubiś further states that ‘the title *Sources of Renewal* itself suggests clearly that the Author regards Vatican II as the cornerstone of the *aggiornamento*. It is his conviction that the Council is a sign of the times for the Church, relating eternal human problems to the Gospel in their contemporary forms and clarifying them by its light.’¹⁷⁴ Archbishop Wojtyła’s Krakow Synod was a truly unique project which brought together more than 500 groups, who as well as

¹⁶⁷ Butler, *Searchings*, 260.

¹⁶⁸ O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 50.

¹⁶⁹ Pesch, *Second Vatican Council*, 55.

¹⁷⁰ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 145.

¹⁷¹ Weigel, 204.

¹⁷² Karol Kardynał Wojtyła, *U podstaw odnowy: studium o realizacji Vaticanum II* (Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, 1972). Published later in English as *Sources of Renewal*.

¹⁷³ From Kubiś’s preface to *Sources of Renewal*. Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, iv.

¹⁷⁴ Wojtyła, i.

participating in the myriad events and discussions were encouraged to help to co-create the results.¹⁷⁵ Weigel describes the synod as an event that brought ‘the experience of Vatican II alive for tens of thousands of Catholics throughout the Kraków area’.¹⁷⁶

Reflecting on the *aggiornamento*, Butler suggests that ‘the very need for accommodating the Church to the world of today and tomorrow, if it was not to lead to compromise with the world, must throw us back to our sources.’¹⁷⁷ If such an approach applies to the call to holiness, it implies that the Council brings holiness back to the original source of biblical holiness. Butler continues: ‘The source of the Church is the Spirit and gospel of Jesus of Nazareth, ever living in the Church he founded, but needing always to be rediscovered and relived.’¹⁷⁸ Butler illustrates the link between the return to the source and the need for renewal by reference to another conciliar document, *Perfectae Caritatis* (PC).¹⁷⁹ The Council Father analyses the *aggiornamento* as applied in this document and calls it ‘accommodated renewal’:¹⁸⁰ ‘The word “accommodated” here refers to contemporary adaptation. The word “renewal”, however, as the text of the decree shows, does not mean “innovation” but “recovery of the initial inspiration”.’¹⁸¹

Can such an approach to *aggiornamento* be applied to an interpretation of holiness in chapter V of LG? It is certainly worth noting that the very first paragraph of PC refers explicitly to *Lumen Gentium*, announcing that, ‘The sacred synod has already shown in the constitution on the Church that the pursuit of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels draws its origin from the doctrine and example of the Divine Master and reveals itself as a splendid sign of the heavenly kingdom,’ (PC 1) and thus hinting at a return to biblical holiness as presented at LG.

In addition to *aggiornamento*, another significant conciliar principle is ‘*ressourcement*’, which is related to the ‘*nouvelle theologie*’ (new theology). In their

¹⁷⁵ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 205. Also, ‘The study groups were the venues in which the Synod built Christian community according to Vatican II’s concept as “communion” (*communio*) of believers.’ The groups were very diverse and included ‘priests and laypeople, intellectuals and workers, men and women, old people and young people [who] met together to pray, to study the Council’s teachings, to compare those teachings with their daily lives, and to suggest applications of the Council’s thought in the various ministries of the archdiocese.’ Weigel, 205.

¹⁷⁶ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 205.

¹⁷⁷ Butler, *Searchings*, 263–64.

¹⁷⁸ Butler, 264.

¹⁷⁹ Vatican Council II, *Perfectae Caritatis. Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life*, 28 October 1965, accessed 10 January 2020, Vatican.va.

¹⁸⁰ Butler, *Searchings*, 264. ‘Accommodated renewal’ is Butler’s preferred translation of the Latin term ‘*accommodata renovatio*’. The English translation on the Vatican website renders the term as ‘adaptation and renewal’ (see PC 2, and indeed the decree’s title).

¹⁸¹ Butler, 264.

analysis of Catholicism and its historical development, Happel and Tracy illustrate the term in relation to the Modernist period¹⁸² and suggest that *ressourcement* ‘symbolizes the whole period from 1920 to 1960 ... The basic meaning of the word is return, but as a widespread recalling of the sources of Catholicism. Recalling becomes rehearing the original message; and Catholic *ressourcement* invoked critical investigation and reassessment of the present in the light of the past.’¹⁸³

However, like Wojtyła in *Sources of Renewal*, Butler does not mention *ressourcement* in his *Theology of Vatican II*. In the chapter on ‘Renewal and Adaptation’ he prefers to focus on the *aggiornamento* and offers examples of its application in *Perfectae Caritatis* while considering the meaning of both updating and returning to the sources.¹⁸⁴ For these reasons, and because of my own opinion, I apply a similar interpretation of the term *aggiornamento* later in this thesis.

The next step is to reflect on whether Wojtyła highlights certain aspects of chapter V in *Sources of Renewal* and how he further develops the idea of implementing holiness. The doctrine of holiness as we find it in chapter V of *Lumen Gentium* (39–42) is directly related to the eschatological consideration of the Christian life in chapter VII (LG 48–51).¹⁸⁵ The relationship between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven and its saints is a key aspect of the doctrine of holiness as it signifies the Christian’s ultimate goal of eternal life in communion with God. In *Sources of Renewal*, Wojtyła emphasises this essential interconnection between the two chapters: ‘Christian holiness is the central theme of faith and the fullness of its realization, that is to say of the “life of faith”. This meaning must be sought, above all in a study of Chapters V and VII of *Lumen Gentium*’.¹⁸⁶ Wojtyła places the theme of holiness in the section entitled ‘The historical and eschatological consciousness’.¹⁸⁷ Unlike LG, however, Wojtyła reverses the order of the theme and focuses first on clarifying the eschatological dimension of the Church and the life of the individual Christian. In explaining the Council’s teaching on the Church on earth and in heaven in LG 50, he contends that:

¹⁸² On Modernism and the new theology, see also Thomas P. Rausch SJ, “The Church and the Council,” in *Contemporary Catholic Theology – a Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 262–69.

¹⁸³ Happel and Tracy, *A Catholic Vision*, 136.

¹⁸⁴ See Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, 1981, 1–25.

¹⁸⁵ For an in-depth study of the development of the text of this chapter see Vojtěch Novotný and Prokop Brož et al., “Eschatologický ráz putující církve a její spojení s církví nebeskou”: geneze a problematika 7. kapitoly konstituce *Lumen Gentium*,” in *Církev a II. vatikánský koncil. Perspektivy současné ekleziologie* (Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2015), 181–195.

¹⁸⁶ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 189.

¹⁸⁷ Wojtyła, 155–200.

Holiness is consequently the fundamental basis on which the formation of the community of the People of God must rest ... The meaning of holiness for the community of the People of God is expressed in all the richness of the mystery of the communion of saints, which Vatican II recalls in the above passages from *Lumen Gentium*. In that mystery is revealed in its fullness also the kind of union proper to the Church as the People of God, that is to say *communio*. In this communion the individual makes a perfect gift of himself to others while at the same time fully realizing himself: thus sanctity seen in its eschatological dimension is fulfilment.¹⁸⁸

The term *communio* is fundamental for Wojtyła, and throughout the book he follows and reflects on it very closely from different angles of the constitution. Wojtyła does not, however, develop here further the idea that human beings give themselves to Christ by giving themselves to others – an echo of Jesus’ statement that in helping ‘these little ones’, we help him (Mt. 25:31-46), and of Paul’s call to offer ourselves as a sacrifice to God and to be constantly renewed (Rom. 12:1-2).

Wojtyła comments on all four components of the call to holiness in chapter V (LG 39–42) but changes the order.¹⁸⁹ A substantial Christological and anthropological approach can be discerned in his reflections, starting with Jesus Christ in LG 40: ‘The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to each and every one of His disciples of every condition. He Himself stands as the author and consumator of this holiness of life: “Be you therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5:48).’ In this context, Wojtyła suggests that ‘in the dimension of the earthly history of salvation, holiness is a vocation and aspiration. The call to holiness comes from Christ the Lord and becomes a characteristic as well as a duty of the Church.’¹⁹⁰ He directs holiness through God’s love according to the conciliar emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit (LG 42) and states that ‘on man’s part, holiness, which is always a response in faith to the divine gift of grace, takes the form of moral perfection, the mainspring of which is charity.’¹⁹¹ His underscoring of humanity and human dignity makes his anthropological approach more than clear: ‘Christian perfection, or holiness, corresponds fully to the dignity of the individual, of which we read so often in the Council

¹⁸⁸ Wojtyła, 191.

¹⁸⁹ LG 39: The holiness of the Church; LG 40: The universal call to holiness; LG 41: Different forms of realizing holiness; LG 42: The path and means of holiness.

¹⁹⁰ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 191.

¹⁹¹ Wojtyła, 192.

documents and particularly in *Gaudium et Spes*.¹⁹² Concerning the call to holiness, however, his central focus is LG 42, which deals with how to walk the path of holiness.

He notes the Council's attention to the call to poverty and the reference to 1 Cor. 7:31 (Greek text) (LG 42) and believes that 'the Council seems to lay special stress on the value of poverty in a broad sense ... The Apostle's words here quoted are particularly apposite in the context of the Council's doctrine concerning the Church, which seeks in the contemporary world to rediscover its own original image of a "Church of the poor" closely attuned to the beatitudes of Christ.'¹⁹³

Wojtyła also links his interpretation of holiness to the person of the Virgin Mary, perhaps even more closely than does LG: *Sources of Renewal* has a chapter entitled 'The meaning of holiness: Mary as a figure of the Church',¹⁹⁴ while LG reflects on the Virgin Mary in a separate chapter from the chapter on holiness. He acknowledges, however, that the Council 'teaches that among all the saints and blessed a special place belongs to the Virgin Mother of God. This doctrine, inherited from unchanging tradition and enriched by new arguments, is set forth in Chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium*.'¹⁹⁵ Such an approach can be considered to be the conciliar *aggiornamento*.

This section has shown that the universal call to holiness means a return to biblical holiness. But how does the holiness presented by the Council relate to today? And what does it mean to be holy in today's context? Such questions also later became the concern of Pope John Paul II, so further work is required to investigate how the principle of *aggiornamento* is applied to his interpretation of holiness and conversion.

2.2. The Understanding of the Human Being in the Christological Perspective of *Gaudium et Spes*

John Paul II showed that holiness could be fully perceived as relating to authentic humanity in his papacy and in his own spiritual life. People may find it challenging to talk about God, but when they see the humanity behind the saint, they can see God behind the saint. How does this relate to humanity and to a holy life as the ultimate human goal?

¹⁹² Wojtyła, 192.

¹⁹³ Wojtyła, 195.

¹⁹⁴ Wojtyła, 189–200.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 197; *Lumen Gentium*, 52–69.

2.2.1. The Christological Perspective of Holiness in *Gaudium et Spes*

Numerous prominent theologians, among them Yves Congar, Karl Rahner and Henri De Lubac, all participants in the Council, contributed to preparing the text of *Gaudium et Spes* (Joy and Hope) and to developing a proper Christological understanding of the faith. In the first half of the twentieth century, such an understanding was present to some extent, but it is fair to say that Catholic explications were not yet fully Trinitarian. The dogmatic constitution on the Catholic faith *Dei Filius*,¹⁹⁶ a product of the First Vatican Council, largely presents its theology in terms of one God. Chapter one, ‘On God the Creator of all things’, states that:

The holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one, true, living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, omnipotent, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intellect and will, and in every perfection; who, although He is one, singular, altogether simple and unchangeable spiritual substance, must be proclaimed distinct in reality and essence from the world; most blessed in Himself and of Himself, and ineffably most high above all things which are or can be conceived outside Himself.¹⁹⁷

In this constitution, Jesus is described as ‘the Son of God’ (*Dei Filius*), ‘Redeemer of Mankind’ (*generis humani Redemptor*), ‘Our Lord’ (*Dominus noster*), and ‘the Author and Finisher of Faith’ (Heb 12:2)’ (*auctor fidei et consummator*), and holiness is expressed more as the perfection (*perfectio*) of the One-Person God: ‘This sole true God by His goodness and “omnipotent power”, not to increase His own beatitude, and not to add to, but to manifest His perfection by the blessings which He bestows on creatures.’¹⁹⁸ Holiness, or perfection, is therefore identified with God’s character. During the first half of the twentieth century, there was a strong ecclesiology of ‘Christ’s Mystical Body’, a term presented by Pope Paul VI, having earlier been developed by Pope Pius XII,¹⁹⁹ but in the second half of the century, a more Christological and Trinitarian perspective began to take root, especially through the teachings the Second Vatican Council. Following the

¹⁹⁶ Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius*, 24 April 1870, accessed 30 December 2019, Vatican.va.

¹⁹⁷ “Vatican I. on Faith and Science – Dei Filius,” *Vatican Observatory*, chap. 1, accessed 30 December 2020, <https://www.vaticanobservatory.org/education/vatican-faith-science-dei-filius/>.

¹⁹⁸ “Vatican I. on Faith and Science – Dei Filius,” chap. 1.

¹⁹⁹ Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, 70. Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis Christi*, 21 November 1943, accessed 1 October 2020, Vatican.va.

Council, we see the development of a Christological theology of holiness, which is also Trinitarian.

The basic thesis of this study is the possibility of interpreting Christian holiness as meaning union with Christ. With respect to the theology of holiness, the constitutions *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* are connected²⁰⁰ by the themes of the universal vocation (LG) and the perspective of human beings in today's world (GS):

The People of God believes that it is led by the Lord's Spirit, Who fills the earth. Motivated by this faith, it labors to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires in which this People has a part along with other men of our age. For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God's design for man's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human. (GS 11)

The Second Vatican Council emphasises that the connecting link is faith, both in terms of discovering *who a human person is* and in terms of seeking the true and successful realisation of human life as individuals and as a whole people.

Numerous studies have been made of 'The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*' and from a variety of perspectives.²⁰¹ McDonagh offers a comprehensive analysis of the document, including the history of the development of the text and its structure, of the Council's methodology, with an emphasis on emerging issues. Weigel focuses on discussing the constitution – referred to in the early sessions of the negotiations as 'Schema XIII' – in terms of how it was formed, especially regarding the issues in which Wojtyła was significantly involved.²⁰² Weigel suggests that the initial thoughts were led by the idea that 'the Church lived in the world and for the world because "nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo" in Christian hearts (GS 1). That the Council should affirm this seemed not only reasonable, but urgently necessary to Karol Wojtyła, who had begun his suggestions for the Council's agenda with an analysis of the crisis of modern humanism.'²⁰³ Weigel refers to Wojtyła's response to the preparation commission, which asked for proposals for appropriate Council topics in June

²⁰⁰ The connection between the two documents is explored by Giacomo Canobbio and Prokop Brož et al., "Církev a její zásadně extrovertní povaha," in *Církev a II. vatikánský koncil. Perspektivy současné ekleziologie* (Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2015), 15.

²⁰¹ Enda McDonagh, "The Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*)," in *Contemporary Catholic Theology – a Reader* (New York: The Continuum Publ., 1999), 294–315. Butler, *Theology of Vatican II*, 181–202. Skalický, *Radost a naděje*.

²⁰² Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 166–169.

²⁰³ Weigel, 166.

1959. Weigel points out that Wojtyła's written response was quite different from that of other Catholic bishops: 'Rather than beginning with what the Church needed to do to reform its own house, he adopted a quite different starting point. What, he asked, is the human condition today? What do the men and women of this age expect to hear from the Church?'²⁰⁴ Wojtyła's approach expresses an authentic Christian humanism and a concern for the human person and for the salvation of humankind through Christ.

In the context of the discussions on the document, Weigel also analyses Wojtyła's speech on 28 September 1965 and identifies it as perhaps the most significant of his speeches at the Council. He also notes that two parts of the constitution, GS 22 and 24, would become some of the most quoted in his pontificate.²⁰⁵ GS 22 concludes the chapter on 'The Dignity of the Human Person' (GS 12–22) and emphasises the link between the Christological²⁰⁶ and anthropological nature of the Christian life:

The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come ... namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that in Him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown.

Referring to GS 22, McDonagh states that 'the return to Christology – Christ, the new human being, the final Adam – at the end of chapter one (GS 22) confirms the council's strategy: humanity can only be finally understood and explained in terms of Jesus Christ. In him we are revealed properly to ourselves.'²⁰⁷ It can be inferred that the anthropological character of holiness is therefore, in fact, Christological: the new humanity is here – 'Christ, the final Adam' (*novissimus Adam*) (GS 22), who is 'the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection' (LG 40). This contribution of the Council is essential for further reflection on the theology of holiness: human beings can only know themselves and

²⁰⁴ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 159. Catholic Church, *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparando. Series I (Antepreparatoria). Volumen II: Consilia et Vota Episcoporum ac Praelatorum. Pars II: Europa*, vol. II (Vatican: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1960), 741–748, accessed 30 October 2021, <https://archive.org/details/ADAI.2/page/n743/mode/2up>.

²⁰⁵ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 169.

²⁰⁶ On the following citation of GS 22 Spinello takes view that 'during John Paul II's papacy, the Pope and Cardinal Ratzinger underscored that the core of *Gaudium et Spes* was article 22, which contradicts those inclined to secularizing interpretations and adds the essential Christological perspective'. Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 22.

²⁰⁷ McDonagh, "The Church in the Modern World," 303.

‘understand [themselves] in the light of Christ’.²⁰⁸ The whole of GS 22 describes the Christian’s conformity to Christ in the Holy Spirit and insists that the way to God the Father is Christ. In GS 22, therefore, the Council presents a Christological conception of holiness that is also anthropological: to follow Christ is to become truly human.

2.2.2. The Application of *Gaudium et Spes* 22 in *Sources of Renewal*

In his post-conciliar study *Sources of Renewal*, Wojtyła addresses the conciliar *aggiornamento* in relation to two dimensions of the Church which he calls ‘the historical and eschatological consciousness of the Church as the People of God.’²⁰⁹ Regarding the first of these dimensions, Wojtyła suggests that ‘the historical consciousness of the Church manifests itself with exceptional clarity. It may be said that the Council’s whole concept of *aggiornamento* (*renovatio accommodata*) is, above all, an expression of that consciousness ... historical consciousness is distinguished by a particular understanding of the subject of history and of the various human environments in which it unfolds.’²¹⁰

Wojtyła deals with GS 22 in the section called ‘Christ and the consciousness of redemption’. He considers as essential the Council’s teaching and message on ‘the mystery of redemption, closely linked with Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection ... This central Christian reality is presented to man in such a way, that following the expression of *Gaudium et Spes*, we can perceive a specific kind of anthropocentrism emerging through the Christocentrism which the Constitution reflects so clearly.’²¹¹ Wojtyła underlines the existential and ontological link between Christ and the human person, between faith in Christ and the human vocation, and notes the centrality of the Council’s question ‘What is man?’ (GS 10):

This answer cannot be separated from the problem of man’s vocation: man confirms his identity by accepting that vocation and making it a reality. Through Jesus Christ and through the mystery of redemption there runs towards man the intensive current of that faith of vocation in which he

²⁰⁸ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 73.

²⁰⁹ See Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 155–200.

²¹⁰ Wojtyła, 173.

²¹¹ Wojtyła, 75. As Rahner notes on Christocentrism: ‘A Christian theology is Christocentric insofar as it rightly shows Christ’s position in the history of creation and salvation to be central, that is conditioning and ordering everything else.’ Karl Rahner, *Dictionary of Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 69.

must recognize himself and his central position in God's eternal plan, the plan of love that has opened itself upon the world.²¹²

Here the emphasis is clearly on the fact that vocation and discovering self-knowledge in Christ is both a *gift* and a *task*. The implication is that knowledge is not a one-time matter but a long-term process of the transformation of one's life and, at the same time, a grace of God.

In all his comments on GS 22, Wojtyła is concerned to emphasise the Council's complete understanding of human beings as 'whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will' (GS 3). Thus, if we apply this perspective to the question of holiness, we see that this too is imbued with the same sense of fullness, as Wojtyła further specifies: 'The consciousness of redemption relates to the whole man, to his inward reality as much as his situation in the external world.'²¹³

If we apply this approach to the dimension of spirituality and the question of the theology of holiness, we can see that several aspects influence the nature of holiness. These are the central Christological dimension of holiness, which orients all of a person's being and doing towards Christ: both the inner life, spirituality, and the outward expressions of the Christian life. In stating that people gain full knowledge of themselves only in light of Christ, the Council and Wojtyła give holiness a strong anthropological and Christological character. To explain the concept of union with Christ, the Council draws on the Apostle Paul's teaching to the Colossians: 'He Who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God ... For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man.' (GS 22)

This same paragraph brings into view the *restoration* by which Wojtyła underlines the human state caused by sin: 'The consciousness of this restoration of man's value by Christ is an integral element of faith linked to the very mystery of the incarnation of God made man.'²¹⁴ Wojtyła also repeatedly emphasises the word *reality*, which underlines both the high importance of the question of holiness and the necessity of following the path of holiness in the context of the constitution's intensive focus on a person's being, on both their earthly and their eschatological reality.

²¹² Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 75.

²¹³ Wojtyła, 75.

²¹⁴ Wojtyła, 77.

The paragraph GS 22 concludes with a fully Trinitarian statement:

Such is the mystery of man, and it is a great one, as seen by believers in the light of Christian revelation. Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful. Apart from His Gospel, they overwhelm us. Christ has risen, destroying death by His death; He has lavished life upon us ... so that, as sons in the Son, we can cry out in the Spirit; Abba, Father.

Here Wojtyła notes the Council's emphasis that redemption is for every person, and that the teaching on redemption includes both *negative* and *positive* aspects consisting of 'the sin of mankind, both personal and social'²¹⁵ as well as an accent on 'human values and dignity'.²¹⁶

Although the word holiness is not directly mentioned in GS 22, the term perfection is used, as is union with Christ, the 'outpouring of the Holy Spirit', and becoming adopted as children of the Father. It can be inferred that the Council's purpose, to which Wojtyła is keen to draw attention, is to demonstrate the Christological dimension of holiness, which is also Trinitarian.

2.3. Conclusion

Reflecting on the conciliar approach to the *aggiornamento* enables us to clarify the need for both *adaptation* and *renewal* of the Christian life. The Council returns to biblical holiness and expresses it by describing its Christological nature, which is especially presented in chapter V of *Lumen Gentium* on the universal call to holiness, which is *communicable* to Jesus' followers. Butler brings a novel approach to holiness in his discussion of the *aggiornamento* in the conciliar decree *Perfectae Caritatis*. Butler interprets the phrase *accommodated renewal* as meaning both an adaptation to today's conditions and *the recovery of the initial inspiration* which we found in the Bible. This approach could also be applied to the interpretation of holiness in *Gaudium et Spes*.

The roots of Wojtyła's conception of holiness include but are not limited to the period after the 1950s, since when Wojtyła was creating and building the concept of holiness through his pastoral activities among the lay faithful and his intellectual efforts on behalf

²¹⁵ He also brings here the term '*mysterium iniquitates*' which is often translated as 'mystery of the evil' and which he later develops in his encyclical on the Holy Spirit; John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 18 May 1986, para. 32, accessed 10 October 2020, Vatican.va.

²¹⁶ Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, 80.

of students and married couples. Further, his post-conciliar study *Sources of Renewal* emphasises the ecclesial character of the realisation of holiness in the communion (*communio*) of the People of God. Here, Christians realise holiness and fullness in their own lives by *making a perfect gift of themselves* to others and thus journeying along the path towards their eschatological destiny. When discussing the conciliar call to holiness, Wojtyła uses the words *perfection* and *holiness* as synonyms and addresses holiness/perfection on two levels: first, it has to do with moral perfection, which is fed by love; secondly, it concerns the relationship between holiness and the dignity of the individual. Finally, it is worth noting that Wojtyła emphasises the importance of the holiness of the Virgin Mary to a greater degree than does the Council.

To summarise the message of *Gaudium et Spes* in the paragraph we are interested in (GS 22), and to answer the question *What is man?* (GS 10), we can say that the Christian vocation is to become conformed to Christ in the Holy Spirit, and that the pathway to God the Father is Christ. The Council offers a Christological conception of holiness that is also anthropological: following Christ is a process of humanisation which takes place in a believing Church that is in the world and that serves the world, and which is focused on contemporary issues.

Wojtyła's commentary in his post-conciliar treatise *Sources of Renewal* speaks of the *aggiornamento* (*renovatio accommodata*) as a manifestation of the *historical consciousness* of the Church. He shows that the conciliar presentation of the core of Christian reality is linked to the mystery of redemption through Christ. According to this Christological character of holiness, all of a person's being and doing, both the inner life and the outer expression, is orientated towards Christ. The vocation of attaining self-knowledge in Christ is both *a gift* and *a task*: knowledge is not a one-time matter, but a long-term transformational process achieved by the grace of God. In emphasising the fact that people gain full knowledge of themselves only in the light of Christ, the Council and Wojtyła alike give holiness a strong anthropological and Christological character.

All this raises further questions for reflection on the topic: Does the holiness presented by the Council take a different form today? How can we bring holiness closer to the contemporary human experience? What does holiness mean today? Such also were the questions that concerned Pope John Paul II. We may also seek to discover whether John Paul applies the principle of *aggiornamento* to his interpretation of holiness.

3. Spiritual Insight into the Magisterium of John Paul II

The previous chapters have presented the foundations of personal holiness in the life of Karol Wojtyła / John Paul II and the roots of his theology of holiness in his pre-papal period and in the view of the Second Vatican Council. The following section will introduce John Paul's encyclicals in the context of holiness, offering a spiritual perspective of the encyclicals as meditations.

3.1. The Encyclical as an Object of Meditation

The encyclicals can be looked at in different ways. This section first presents the nature of the encyclicals as documents of the magisterium. The next section explores John Paul II's approach to the encyclicals as meditations. What did this mean for him? And is it somehow related to the theme of holiness?

3.1.1. The Nature of Encyclicals

The encyclicals are essential documents within the Catholic Church. An encyclical²¹⁷ is 'literally, a circular letter; this name, applied to the circular letter of the Popes since the 7th century, has been a technical term since the 18th century. An encyclical is cited by the word with which it opens'.²¹⁸ Two types of encyclical are distinguished: *epistolae encyclicae* and *litterae encyclicae* (Latin). Spinello suggests that *epistolae encyclicae* (or 'encyclical epistles') target a more limited group of believers; they 'might commemorate a historic event or protest a state action', an example of which is John Paul II's *Slavorum Apostoli*, an encyclical written to celebrate the anniversary of Saints Cyril and Methodius.²¹⁹ The *litterae encyclicae* (or 'encyclical letters') address the whole Church

²¹⁷ This section on the nature of the encyclicals is based on section 1.3 of my previous rigorous thesis. Magda Bušková, "The Theology of Holiness According to St John Paul II in the Encyclicals of His Pontificate" (Rigorous Thesis, Prague, Charles University, 2021), 11–12, <https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/125613>.

²¹⁸ Karl Rahner, *Dictionary of Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 147, accessed 10 January 2020, <http://archive.org/details/dictionaryoftheo000rahn>.

²¹⁹ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 56. John Paul II, "Slavorum Apostoli," 2 June 1985, Vatican.va.

or the broader public.²²⁰ The introduction to such encyclicals may be addressed not only to the Catholic Church but also to ‘all people of good will’, as Spinello points out,²²¹ using the example of *Evangelium Vitae* (‘The Gospel of Life’).²²² Another example is the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (‘The Social Concern’).²²³ *Redemptor Hominis* (‘The Redeemer of Man’) contains the greeting ‘and to all men and women of good will’.²²⁴

The fourteen encyclicals of John Paul II deal with various topics, but the union of human beings with Christ runs through them like a golden thread and constitutes the heart of his writing on the theology of holiness. Spinello, the chief commentator on John Paul II’s encyclicals, suggests that ‘in general they fall into one of three categories: *doctrinal*, *social* and *exhortatory*’.²²⁵ Spinello also points out that ‘the encyclical takes center stage among papal pronouncements’.²²⁶ Encyclicals belong to the most influential writings of the Catholic Church and present the most comprehensive view of its doctrine.²²⁷ Particularly, those of John Paul II ‘develop the theological underpinnings for an orthodox interpretation of the major teachings of the Second Vatican Council’.²²⁸

Spinello reminds us that ‘the Pope speaks as the Vicar of Christ and with the full weight of his office when he issues an encyclical to the faithful’.²²⁹ It can be argued that these documents also represent the collaborative work of the Magisterium. However, John Paul II often imprints into his encyclicals something specific and personal from his life, spiritual experience, and thoughts. Furthermore, by signing the encyclicals, a pope communicates his personal attitude. Indeed, in these documents, John Paul II sometimes directly expresses and indicates his personal experience, as we shall see further.

The subject matter of encyclicals often takes in issues relating to scientific, practical and popular fields. John Paul II is known for his extensive intellectual and pastoral activities. Why, therefore, does he consider the encyclicals and their content essentially as *meditations*? He calls them such in *Evangelium Vitae* para 6 and in *Dives in Misericordia* (‘Rich in Mercy’) para 13. What does John Paul mean by this? Does he

²²⁰ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 56. The author also offers a detailed analysis of the history of the encyclical in the Church. Spinello, 56–63.

²²¹ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 56.

²²² Spinello, 56. John Paul II, “*Evangelium Vitae*,” 25 March 1995, Vatican.va.

²²³ John Paul II, “*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,” 30 December 1987, Vatican.va.

²²⁴ John Paul II, “*Redemptor Hominis*,” 4 March 1979, Vatican.va.

²²⁵ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 56.

²²⁶ Spinello, 57.

²²⁷ Spinello, 14.

²²⁸ Spinello, 63.

²²⁹ Spinello, 57.

consider meditation merely a benefit or encouragement, or is it a necessity on the path of holiness?

3.1.2. Meditation and Synergism

This section will provide a spiritual introduction to the encyclicals as *meditations*. The Catechism reminds us that ‘the Christian tradition comprises three major expressions of the life of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer. They have in common the recollection of the heart.’²³⁰ In terms of the etymology, *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* explains that ‘the roots of the word *meditation* go back to the Greek *meleté* with its meanings of “care, study, exercise.” Its Latin roots convey the sense of preparation and practice.’²³¹ From the perspective of spiritual theology and the Christian life, Jordan Aumann explores the meaning of *meditation* through the lives and teachings of St Teresa of Jesus, St Ignatius, St Thomas Aquinas and St John of the Cross. Aumann speaks about an initial ‘vocal prayer’, which leads on to the ‘discursive meditation’, which he considers a ‘higher form of prayer’.²³² He explains:

Discursive meditation can be defined as a reasoned application of the mind to some supernatural truth in order to penetrate its meaning, love it, and carry it into practice with the assistance of grace. The distinguishing note of meditation is that it is a discursive type of prayer, and therefore attention is absolutely indispensable. As soon as we cease to reason or discourse, we cease to meditate. We may have given way to distraction, deliberately turned our mind to something else, or passed on to affective prayer or contemplation, but without discursus there is no meditation.²³³

²³⁰ “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” para. 2721. For a clearer understanding regarding the terms, Wright states that ‘the terms meditation and contemplation are sometimes used interchangeably. But when a distinction is made, it usually refers to the different ways in which the mind functions in prayer. If in our response to God there is an extended pondering of different aspects of God’s presence and activity, we are meditating. However, if there is a simple gazing, with our attention fixed lovingly upon just one or two aspects, we are contemplating. Sometimes a distinction is made between meditation and contemplation by saying that in meditation reasoning predominates, and in contemplation imagination predominates. A development from meditation to contemplation is a normal pattern of growth in prayer.’ John H. Wright SJ, “Prayer,” in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 774.

²³¹ Lawrence Freeman OSB, “Meditation,” in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 648.

²³² Jordan Aumann OP, *Spiritual Theology* (London: Continuum, 2006), 317. Referring to St Teresa of Jesus, Aumann mentions ‘the grades of prayer’, which include (1) vocal prayer, (2) meditation, (3) affective prayer, (4) prayer of simplicity, (5) infused contemplation, (6) prayer of quiet, (7) prayer of union, (8) prayer of conforming union, and (9) prayer of transforming union: ‘The first four grades of prayer belong to the predominantly ascetical stage of the spiritual life; the remaining five grades are infused prayer and belong to the mystical phase of the spiritual life.’ Aumann, 316.

²³³ Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, 319.

For Aumann, then, the sequence of steps involves reason, which helps one to understand the truth, and love, which enables one to acquire the truth, and its voluntary and willing use in the life of the Gospel. This conception of meditation sees it as part of the path of progress in the spiritual life. Discursive meditation was also included in Wojtyła's analysis of the works of St John of the Cross, especially in relation to chapters 12–15 of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*.²³⁴ Wojtyła reflects that 'there is communication with God in discursive meditation. It is experienced as an affective adherence through the virtue of faith to that which is revealed.'²³⁵

Just as Aumann speaks of the help of grace in discursive meditation, so Tomáš Špidlík SJ suggests that 'progress in the spiritual life corresponds to the efforts of the person who cooperates with grace. The Greek term for this is *synergism*, the joint action of human powers and the Holy Spirit.'²³⁶ It should be noted, however, that in the Catholic conception, *synergism* means that 'both man's power to work at his salvation and the exercise of that power (by efficacious grace) are the gift of God's grace.'²³⁷ John Paul II does not use the term *synergism* in his encyclicals. He does refer to a similar concept, however, such as in his description of the ecclesial character of salvation: 'Salvation, which always remains a gift of the Holy Spirit, requires man's cooperation, both to save himself and to save others' (RMi 9). In a conversation about the usefulness of faith in human life and cooperation with God's grace, John Paul states that 'only God can save man, but He expects man to cooperate.'²³⁸ Similarly, in relation to meditation, *synergism* can be perceived as cooperation with God's grace that allows such cooperation and helps to dispose a person towards it.

Christian meditation also has a 'Christocentric' character: 'The Eucharist, community worship, cooperative work in the world, Scripture, and study of the tradition create the nourishing ground of Christian meditation. Meditation also returns us to these traditional

²³⁴ Wojtyła, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*, 121. John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh OCD and Otilio Rodriguez OCD (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1973).

²³⁵ Wojtyła, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*, 121.

²³⁶ Tomáš Špidlík, *Prameny světla. Příručka křesťanské dokonalosti* (Velehrad: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2005), 61.

²³⁷ Karl Rahner, "Synergism," in *Dictionary of Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

²³⁸ The Pope adds that 'the truth according to which man is called to cooperate with God in all things, with a view toward the ultimate purpose of his life—his salvation and divinization—found expression in the Eastern tradition in the doctrine of *synergism*. With God, man "creates" the world; with God, man "creates" his personal salvation.' John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), para. 29.

practices with renewed depth and holiness.²³⁹ Here we see meditation in its relation to holiness: it is the *modus operandi* of holiness and one of its most significant aspects.

3.1.3. The Application of Meditation and the Path to Holiness

John Paul II draws on the richness of the meditation he experienced during his teenage years when he was taught it by, among others, the lay worker Jan Tyranowski, whom Pope Francis promulgated as ‘Venerated’.²⁴⁰ Tyranowski introduced the young Wojtyła to the mystics of Spanish spirituality, St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Jesus (of Ávila), and taught him to interpret them and meditate upon them.²⁴¹ Williams informs us that ‘Tyranowski engaged in meditation about four hours every morning’ and this same commitment was carried by Wojtyła into his days as pope, doing ‘something similar before daily Mass and in the course of the day. Sometimes Tyranowski was observed to be in a state of spiritual abstraction when not at prayer. This has also been observed of Wojtyła in such places as trains and university corridors.’²⁴² For retreats, especially, Wojtyła applied the method of St Ignatius as mentioned by Jan Machniak, who observed that ‘[he] became familiar with this method in the seminary under the guidance of Fr Stanisław Smoleński, who was later made Auxiliary Bishop of Kraków.’²⁴³ Wojtyła used the same method in his retreats during his pontificate. One of the significant impulses in John Paul’s use of and appeals to meditation was the emphasis of the Second Vatican Council in the *Decree on the Apostolate of Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*²⁴⁴ (hereafter AA), in which the Council fathers link the spiritual life to the apostolate of the laity: ‘The success of the lay apostolate depends upon the laity’s living union with Christ’ (AA 4). The lay faithful are urged to continually seek to understand God’s word through meditation:

²³⁹ Freeman, “Meditation,” 650.

²⁴⁰ Pope Francis promulgated ‘the heroic virtues of the Servant of God John Tyranowski, Layman; born 9 February 1901, died 15 March 1947.’ Pope Francis, “Promulgazione di Decreti della Congregazione delle Cause dei Santi,” 21 January 2017, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2017/01/21/0046/00110.html>.

²⁴¹ Wojtyła deepened the Spanish author’s teaching in his dissertation. Wojtyła, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*.

²⁴² Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II*, 80.

²⁴³ John Paul II and Karol Wojtyła, *In God’s Hands: The Spiritual Diaries 1962-2003*, trans. Joanna Rzepa (London: HarperCollins, 2017), xix.

²⁴⁴ Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.

Only by the light of faith and by meditation on the word of God can one always and everywhere recognize God in Whom ‘we live, and move, and have our being’ (Acts 17:28), seek His will in every event, see Christ in everyone whether he be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgments about the true meaning and value of temporal things both in themselves and in their relation to man’s final goal. (AA 4)

In most of his fourteen encyclicals, John Paul II either mentions *meditation* or appeals to it directly (see, for example, EV 30, EV 31, DM 2, DV 54, DV 64, RMat 8, RMi 65). Does this pope consider, therefore, the encyclical and its contents to be, essentially, a *meditation*? Is meditation in the encyclicals considered in any relation to holiness? The following examples of John Paul’s notion of meditation bring out some of the significant themes of the encyclicals.

In *Evangelium Vitae*, John Paul II submits ‘to meditate upon once more and proclaim the Gospel of life, the splendour of truth which enlightens consciences, the clear light which corrects the darkened gaze, and the unfailing source of faithfulness and steadfastness in facing the ever new challenges which we meet along our path’ (EV 6). Furthermore, it is expressed there that ‘with our attention fixed on the Lord Jesus, we wish to hear from him once again “the words of God” (Jn. 3:34) and meditate anew on the Gospel of life’ (EV 30). As in other encyclicals, John Paul II also reminds us that life is to be centred on Christ. He urges us to look upon the cross and the Crucified one, and to consider what it means to sacrifice one’s life for another (Jn. 15:13). In such a context, his idea of meditation is transformed and ‘becomes praise and thanksgiving, and at the same time urges us to imitate Christ and follow in his footsteps (cf. 1 Pt 2:21)’ (EV 51). Here it is clear how the discursive meditation of which Aumann writes brings the meditator before Christ and to the knowledge of ‘supernatural truths’.²⁴⁵

In the moral teaching of the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, John Paul states that ‘our meditation on the dialogue between Jesus and the rich young man has enabled us to bring together the essential elements of Revelation in the Old and New Testament with regard to moral action’ (VS 28). Here it is apparent that John Paul II understands the encyclical and its contents as a meditation: the encyclical is a written form of meditation.

In *Dives in Misericordia*, an encyclical on God’s mercy, John Paul suggests that ‘in fact, revelation and faith teach us not only to meditate in the abstract upon the mystery of God as “Father of mercies,” but also to have recourse to that mercy in the name of Christ

²⁴⁵ Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, 319.

and in union with Him' (DM 2). Further, in the context of mercy and true living according to the Gospel, he considers the importance of the 'constant meditation on the Word of God' (DM 13). Here the Pope reaffirms that the Christian encounters supernatural truths through meditation and emphasises the day-to-day character of meditation.

The encyclical on the Holy Spirit, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, presents a challenge for the third millennium, a 'call to all those who "worship God in spirit and truth." It should be for everyone a special occasion for meditating on the mystery of the Triune God, who in himself is wholly transcendent with regard to the world, especially the visible world' (DV 54). And further, the Pope continues regarding 'the relationship of communion that man has with God as his Creator, Lord and Redeemer. This is a truth which on the basis of the Council's teaching we can meditate on, explain and apply in all the fullness of its meaning in this phase of transition from the second to the third Christian Millennium' (DV 64). There is renewed emphasis on the need for the Christian to meditate on revealed truths, which becomes an essential part of the person's spirituality and their life in the Spirit. It can thus be deduced that meditation is about an inner comprehension of the facts by the heart: both a rational grasp, and a grasp of love.

John Paul II's intensive focus on and close relationship to the Mother of God is clearly seen in *Redemptoris Mater*.²⁴⁶ The encyclical includes a reflection on Mary's meeting with the archangel Gabriel (Lk. 1:28). John Paul invites us 'to meditate together with Mary on these words, and especially on the expression "full of grace"' (RMat 8), which is one of the leading ideas in the encyclical. Mary is also presented as a model of one who meditates: 'For the Church of that time and of every time Mary is a singular witness to the years of Jesus' infancy and hidden life at Nazareth, when she "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19; cf. Lk. 2:51)' (RMat 26). The word 'ponder' (in Greek, *syballousa* / *συμβάλλουσα*) can be considered a synonym for *meditate upon*. Müller comments on this Marian character of meditation, and emphasises the ecclesial character of meditation, thus underlining the task of both Church and Christian. Müller states that 'like Mary, the reader is to treasure the Gospels in his heart and meditate on them ... it is already possible here to understand Mary as a symbol of the Church that keeps the Gospel and reflects on it all the time (*symballo*).'²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ John Paul II, "*Redemptoris Mater*," March 25, 1987, Vatican.va.

²⁴⁷ Paul-Gerhard Müller, *Nový zákon. Evangelium sv. Lukáše*, vol. 3, Malý stuttgartský komentář (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1998), 38.

In *Redemptoris Missio*, which addresses the subject of Christian mission, John Paul writes that ‘our times are both momentous and fascinating. While on the one hand people seem to be pursuing material prosperity and to be sinking ever deeper into consumerism and materialism, on the other hand we are witnessing a desperate search for meaning, the need for an inner life, and a desire to learn new forms and methods of meditation and prayer’ (RMi 38). The Pope was aware of the challenges and needs of people and responded with encyclicals that offered an environment for and a means of meditation.

The Pope does not address the concept of meditation in detail in the encyclicals, nor does he refer to related literature. This is also true of the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*²⁴⁸ (hereafter NMI), the essential aspect of which is to prepare spiritually the Church and every Christian for the third millennium. He explicitly highlights here, first, that the text is meditation and comes from meditation, and secondly, that Christian life and spirituality must meditate first and act second. He emphasises the importance of ‘trying “to be” before trying “to do.” In this regard, we should recall how Jesus reproved Martha: “You are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful” (Lk. 10:41-42)’ (NMI 15). Regarding the nature of Christian meditation, there is just a short note on the document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The document was presented by Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect at the time, and approved by John Paul II (MNI 33). The Congregation addresses the issue of bringing Christian meditation closer to non-Christian varieties, and with reference to St Augustine and St Teresa of Jesus explains the possible dangers of ‘syncretism’. Crucial here is the role of the Holy Spirit and the need to focus meditation and the experience of one’s life on Jesus on the cross and the whole Trinity.²⁴⁹ In the letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, John Paul II calls on us to meditate on ‘the mystery of Christ’ and, further, to contemplate ‘the face of Christ’ (NMI 15). It is clear, therefore, that meditation and contemplation²⁵⁰ become still more significant aspects of the development of the Christian life.

²⁴⁸ John Paul II, “*Novo Millennio Ineunte*. Apostolic Letter at the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000,” 6 January 2001, accessed 10 October 2020, Vatican.va.

²⁴⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “*Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation*,” 15 October 1989, accessed 30 October 2021, Vatican.va.

²⁵⁰ His emphasis on the need for meditation and contemplation on the path of Christian holiness may have roots in his interest in the work and spirituality of St John of the Cross, about whom he wrote his dissertation. Reflecting on the thoughts of St John of the Cross regarding meditation and contemplation in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Wojtyła notes that ‘in meditation the soul’s activity is more evident; in contemplation it is more a matter of “rest and fruition”’. Wojtyła, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*, 78.

Pope Francis contributes significantly to the theme of meditation in his catechesis on meditation.²⁵¹ Francis emphasises the role of the Holy Spirit, stating that ‘every moment of Jesus’ earthly life, through the grace of prayer, can become immediate to us, thanks to the Holy Spirit, the guide. But, you know, one cannot pray without the guidance of the Holy Spirit.’ The Christological character of meditation is explained in this catechesis and Francis stresses that ‘for us Christians, meditating is a way to encounter Jesus. And in this way, only in this way, we rediscover ourselves. And this is not a withdrawal into ourselves, no: going to Jesus, and from Jesus, discovering ourselves, healed, risen, strong by the grace of Jesus.’²⁵² Regarding encyclicals, however, Pope Francis, unlike Pope John Paul II, does not use the term meditation to introduce an encyclical or to explain the theme of such a document.

John Paul II helps us to see the text not only as doctrine but also as a stimulus for a deeper spiritual life and adherence to Christ, since, as Molinari reminds us in his study of the nature of holiness according to the Second Vatican Council, ‘holiness depends on union with Christ.’²⁵³ Here we are reminded of an essential characteristic of John Paul II that we met in Chapter 1 of this thesis, namely his deep relationship with prayer, including meditation.²⁵⁴ Sławomir Oder, the postulator for John Paul II’s beatification process, gives many examples of prayers and times from which John Paul drew strength and the solution to various situations,²⁵⁵ and speaks of the Pope’s personal experience of the importance of meditation and the need for ‘intellectual formation’,²⁵⁶ especially as a priest:

Study of the humanities and of philosophy and a knowledge of theology are the paths to this intellectual formation, which then needs to be continued for the rest of one’s life. In order to be authentically formative, study needs to be constantly accompanied by prayer, meditation, and the invocation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of the Lord ... I have prayed for the gifts of the Holy Spirit since my youth and I continue to do so.²⁵⁷

²⁵¹ Francis, “*Catechesis on Prayer: 31. The Meditation*,” 21 April 2021, Vatican.va.

²⁵² Francis.

²⁵³ Paulo Molinari, “Svatý,” in *Slovník spirituality* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1999), 949–950. “Lumen Gentium,” paras. 39–42, 49–50.

²⁵⁴ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 155.

²⁵⁵ Oder and Gaeta, 147–54.

²⁵⁶ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, 73.

²⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, 73.

Through his life and convictions, John Paul II emphasises the pneumatological character of the Christian life, which shapes the relationship of lifelong study, prayer and meditation to a life lived with the Trinity. Through his love and his teaching, he shows that the key to authentic life with and in Christ is to remain permanently in meditation, in union with Christ in the Holy Spirit. He learned in and through meditation, he worked and wrote in and through meditation. The Pope dwelt in meditation before Christ; he lived the whole day as a meditation with the Lord, and thus he linked the essential meaning of such meditation with Christian holiness.

3.2. Conclusion

John Paul II's immersion in God brings to the encyclicals a share of his spiritual life and deep trust in God's providence. He processed the encyclicals *in meditation* and as a *form of meditation*, to which he invites all who read them. In his interpretation, a meditation on the content of the encyclicals is a meditation guided by faith, love and hope. Meditation is therefore a path by which Christians deepen their union with Christ and foster holiness. In John Paul II's encyclicals, we see meditation and holiness as mutual phenomena that are related and that intertwine in union with Christ. The next chapter, on the Christological character of holiness, will further develop this theme.

4. The Christological Character of Holiness

John Paul II began his pontificate with the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* ('The Redeemer of Man'), which is therefore the starting point for developing the other themes of his doctrine and his approach to the issues of the time. And it is with *Redemptor Hominis* that we will begin our exploration of the Christological character of holiness: John Paul II's theology of holiness begins with Jesus as the model and proceeds through the Church to every Christian. The analysis in the rigorous thesis yielded a crucial aspect of the Christological character, namely the union of the Christian with Christ, a theme that will be developed here. First, with reference to *Gaudium et Spes* para 22, we will reflect on the relationship between the Christological and anthropological aspects of holiness. Next, we will focus on the significant aspects of holiness interpreted as union with Christ and their inter-relationships, including the question of when a person is in deeper union with Christ, and insights into the various meanings of the term 'union'. The contribution of the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* will bring the essential emphasis on the person of God the Father and God's relationship, through Christ, to the human person in the context of mercy and discovering the invisible God. Finally, the context of holiness will be explored in relation to the kingdom of God and concretised in the treatise on the new evangelisation.

4.1. The Relationship between the Christological and Anthropological Aspects of Holiness

Spinello directs our attention to the combination of John Paul II's philosophical approach, whereby he intends 'to construct an integral vision of the human person as embodied transcendence,'²⁵⁸ and his faithful conciliar interpretation of *Gaudium et Spes*. Such a focus was a feature of this pope's opening encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, in which 'his deeply Christological approach to humanism becomes manifest. It is not our metaphysical structure but our relationship to Jesus Christ, the "perfect man" (GS 22), that most profoundly characterizes our personhood.'²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 66.

²⁵⁹ Spinello, 66.

Reflecting on such an approach in the context of holiness, two aspects open up: the Christological and the anthropological character of holiness. The starting point regarding the Christological character of holiness is the man Jesus, the ‘perfect man’ (GS 22), and from here we go to the human person. With the anthropological starting point, people, in their concreteness, walk towards Christ. The two characters intertwine, and this interpenetration of the Christological and anthropological characters of holiness is clear in another statement of the Council Fathers, that ‘Whoever follows after Christ, the perfect man, becomes himself more of a man’ (GS 41).

This view of the relationship between Christology and anthropology is addressed by the International Theological Commission, which in 1981 proposed that this relationship ‘has to be worked out anew in terms of their mutual analogies.’²⁶⁰ The anthropological aspects of Christology are addressed in GS 22, which states that ‘the mystery of God and man is shown to the world as the mystery of love.’²⁶¹ Regarding the anthropological aspects of Christology, the commission emphasises that:

The following of the Cross and communion with the crucified Jesus Christ do not destroy man but signify and can even bring about the end of many forms of alienation, which result ultimately from the power of sin and the slavery of the law and death. This signifies and confers the freedom to which we have been called through Jesus Christ (cf. Gal 5:1-13). For this reason, it is the Pasch of the Lord, namely, participation in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which show the true way by which man is brought to perfection.²⁶²

The way of following Jesus is referred to as the ‘way of perfection’, which includes the cross. Here is a reference to Jesus’ call: ‘If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget self, carry his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his own life for my sake will find it’ (Mt. 16:24-26).

In the encyclicals, John Paul II often uses the teaching of GS 22, both by direct quotation (such as RH 8, RH 13, DM 1), and by indirect application (such as RH 11), usually linked to the conciliar emphasis that ‘For, by his Incarnation, he, the son of God, in a certain way united himself with every man’ (GS 22). Even so, in the encyclicals, the statement that Christ is ‘the perfect man’ is found only in *Redemptor Hominis* (RH 8).

²⁶⁰ International Theological Commission, “Theology, Christology, Anthropology” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1981), para. D1, Vatican.va.

²⁶¹ International Theological Commission, para. D3.

²⁶² International Theological Commission, para. D2, D3.

The biblical text and conciliar emphasis alike insist that ‘He who is the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15), is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin’ (GS 22, RH 8). This leads to a Christological conception of holiness which is also anthropological.²⁶³

4.2. Union with Christ and His Redemptive Work

In this section, the conclusions on the Christological character of holiness from the rigorous thesis are used as supporting pillars, where among the more significant conclusions is the suggestion that, especially in his first encyclical, John Paul II interprets holiness as union with Christ.²⁶⁴

4.2.1. The Union of the Christian with Christ

John Paul II’s opening encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (RH), promulgated in March 1979, aligns the entire programme of the new pontificate with Christ the Redeemer. That the encyclical is, yes, a document of the Magisterium, but one which nonetheless bears the personal thoughts, life experience and inspiration of Karol Wojtyła, is a view offered by the new pontiff’s former co-worker Stanisław Dziwisz, who states that ‘his programmatic encyclical was the synthesis of Vatican II and the legacy he brought with him from Poland. The Pope then translated this synthesis into a commitment to combine the Church’s mission with service to all men—all men, not just abstractly, not just symbolically, but in their concrete, historical reality, both as individuals and as members of social communities.’²⁶⁵

The encyclical opens with the words ‘Jesus Christ is the centre of the universe and of history’ (RH 1). The encyclical addresses the whole Church and ‘all people of goodwill’ (RH intro.), and even though it was composed almost half a century ago, its message and

²⁶³ For the theology and anthropology of John Paul II see, for example, Ronald D. Lawler, *The Christian Personalism of Pope John Paul II* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982); George H. Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981); Deborah Savage, *The Subjective Dimension of Human Work. The Conversion of the Acting Person According to Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II and Bernard Lonergan* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008); John J. Coughlin, ‘Pope John Paul II and the Dignity of the Human Being,’ *Harv. J.L. & Pub. Poly* 27, no. 1 (2003–2004): 65–79, accessed 1 June 2021, https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/law_faculty_scholarship/494/.

²⁶⁴ Bušková, “The Theology of Holiness According to St John Paul II in the Encyclicals of His Pontificate,” 30–49.

²⁶⁵ Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, *A Life with Karol. My Forty-Year Friendship with the Man Who Became Pope* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2008), 72.

teaching remain wholly relevant. The letter reflects on the redemptive role and mission of Jesus Christ and the incorporation of humankind and the Church into the mystery of Christ. The Pope suggests that the most crucial question facing the Church in the third millennium is: ‘How, in what manner should we continue?’ (RH 7).²⁶⁶ What does this question mean in relation to our exploration of holiness? His question could be restated as: ‘How are we to live, and continue living, a life of holiness?’ John Paul II provides an answer that sets out the Christological character of responses to such a question: ‘Our response must be: Our spirit is set in one direction, the only direction for our intellect, will and heart is towards Christ our Redeemer, towards Christ, the Redeemer of man’ (RH 7).

In his positive critique of John Paul II’s teaching, Jan Machniak addresses *Redemptor Hominis* and notes the link between holiness and union with God:

John Paul II notes that the key to understanding man, his origins and destiny, is Jesus Christ, God incarnate, the Redeemer of man. In the saving event of the incarnation of the Son-Word, the history of man reached its peak. God has become man’s one and ‘Only’ subject of human history. This truth of the Christian faith is the basis for reflection on the concept of the Christian’s holiness encompassing his or her union with God. This thought runs through almost all the documents of this pontificate as an answer to the question of the meaning and purpose of human life.²⁶⁷

Machniak is saying that the Pope’s Christological approach means that the holiness of the Christian is an essential aspect of union with God.

John Paul II interprets the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*, by reflecting on Christ as the Redeemer and on the ‘mystery of redemption’ (RH 7) and promotes the idea of the Council Fathers that ‘for by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man’ (GS 22, RH 13). He continues that ‘the Church therefore sees its fundamental task in enabling that union to be brought about and renewed continually’ (RH 13), which emphasises the ecclesial character of the union. John Paul cultivates further the concept of communion with God as *union with Christ* in the Church (cf. RH 13) but underlines

²⁶⁶ Spinello points out that such a question was posed in Wojtyła’s *Sources of Renewal*, which addressed the matter of ‘How should the Church continue in the wake of the Second Vatican Council?’ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 72.

²⁶⁷ Jan Machniak, “Wizja duchowości chrześcijańskiej, czyli świętości, w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II. [A vision of Christian spirituality or holiness, in the teaching of John Paul II],” *DUCHOWOŚĆ W POLSCE. Polskie Stowarzyszenie Teologów Duchowości* 19–20, no. 2017–2018 (2018): 144. (My translation.)

that ‘this union of Christ with man is in itself a mystery’ (RH 18). What is the meaning of such union and what is its relation to holiness according to John Paul II?

Drawing on the approach taken by spiritual theology, we will first illuminate the Old Testament biblical view. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* refers to the biblical view of union with God, especially as found in the Song of Songs: ‘Monastic theologians and mystics found a depiction of the individual soul’s union with God in the Song’s language and imagery. This “spiritual marriage” tradition is found in the poetry and other writings of Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Fray Luis de Leon (Arminjon, *Cantata of Love*, 39–40).’²⁶⁸ Christology then transforms ‘union with God’ into ‘union with Christ’, a union that grows from baptism, although it is still a mystery and it is necessary to recall the conciliar statement that ‘For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man’ (GS 22, RH 13). The *Lexham* dictionary states that ‘in general, the New Testament associates baptism with repentance, spiritual cleansing, union with Christ, death to sin, regeneration and new life, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.’²⁶⁹ The epistle to the Philippians offers the prime example of one of the key aspects of union with Christ: ‘Philippians presents joy as an essential outgrowth of union with Christ in the gospel.’²⁷⁰ Joy is thus a distinct and concrete sign of union with Christ and the life of the saints.

The New Catholic Dictionary describes union with Christ in the context of prayer and of the fulfilment and development of spiritual life into a ‘transforming union’.²⁷¹ It emphasises the Christological character of holiness and also underlines the role of the Holy Spirit, stating that:

The unitive way is the framework used by spiritual authors in describing a prayer experiences that mark those who have attained maturity in the spiritual journey. In the conclusion of the illuminative way, the person has been graced with prayer experiences conforming the mind and

²⁶⁸ John D. Barry, ed., “Book Song of Songs,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, n.d.), <https://app.logos.com/>. Also, understanding union with God as addressed by St John of the Cross was one of the significant themes in Wojtyła’s dissertation. Wojtyła, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*.

²⁶⁹ John D. Barry, ed., “Sacraments,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, n.d.), <https://app.logos.com/>.

²⁷⁰ John D. Barry, ed., “Philippians, Letter to the Critical Issues,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, n.d.), <https://app.logos.com/>.

²⁷¹ Thomas McGonigle OP, “Union. Unitive Way,” in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993).

heart to Christ and has been initially purified at the core of her or his personality. The individual is now ready for the activity of the Holy Spirit in transforming union.²⁷²

What does union with Christ mean for the spiritual theologian Aumann? His approach highlights union with Christ in line with God's grace. For Aumann, a Christian's spiritual life leads towards holiness, which he expresses as 'perfection' or 'sanctification', believing that 'the degree of union with God and of perfection in the spiritual life will depend on the extent to which the soul is permeated with grace.'²⁷³ He further presents the Christological character of holiness when stating that 'Jesus Christ is the source of grace for us ... Every soul that receives from Christ the life of grace that he came to give us is by that very fact living a life of union with Christ.'²⁷⁴ If Aumann illuminates the nature of union with Christ in relation to grace, he does not neglect the manner in which to live such a life. He therefore emphasises the necessity of conscious experience: 'One should also live with an awareness of union with Christ, and this is achieved through acts of faith in Christ, a meditation on the mysteries of the life of Christ, and frequent reception of the sacraments instituted by Christ, especially the Eucharist.'²⁷⁵

This provides more clarification regarding union with Christ according to the Second Vatican Council document and the encyclicals of John Paul II. The English word 'union' can take the form of various Latin words, such as *ūniō*, *ūnitās* and *coniūctiō*. For example, the conciliar document *Lumen Gentium* states that 'all men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains' (LG 3). The Latin word used in this text is *ūniō*.²⁷⁶ In another part of the text (chapter V), which deals with the earthly and heavenly Church in the context of the universal call to holiness, the words union and holiness become more like synonyms:

²⁷² McGonigle OP. Similarly, in Perrin's brief description of spiritual development we read that 'the traditional three ways of the Christian life – the purgative way, the illuminative way, and the unitive way – are often referred to as the classical spiritual itinerary. Although they are described separately, with their own salient characteristics and method of prayer, together these ways form a singular journey that leads the Christian ever more deeply in the life and love of God in this world that God and humans share.' David B. Perrin, *Studying Christian Spirituality* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 248.

²⁷³ Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, 46.

²⁷⁴ Aumann, 60.

²⁷⁵ Aumann, 60.

²⁷⁶ 'Omnes homines ad hanc vocantur unionem cum Christo, qui est lux mundi, a quo procedimus, per quem vivimus, ad quem tendimus.' *Lumen Gentium*, para. 3.

When we look at the lives of those who have faithfully followed Christ, we are inspired with a new reason for seeking the City that is to come (cf. Heb. 13:14; 11:10) and at the same time we are shown a most safe path by which among the vicissitudes of this world, in keeping with the state in life and condition proper to each of us, we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ, that is, perfect holiness (cf. Heb. 13, 7 etc.). (LG 50)

In his analysis of holiness in *Lumen Gentium* chapters V and VII, Molinari points out that in LG 50 and other conciliar texts ‘the holiness is explicitly identified with union with Christ.’²⁷⁷ The Latin word for union used here is also *ūniō*, which means that union is directly linked with Christ and expresses the Christological character of holiness. The essential term related to LG 50 is the eschatological perspective and the concept of the Communion of Saints (*communio sanctorum*). The article of faith concerning the Communion of Saints, which has been part of the Confession of Faith since the fifth century, ‘is based on the New Testament Greek term *koinōnia* (communion), which means communion in faith, at the Eucharist celebration, communion with Jesus Christ and all of the faithful with one another’.²⁷⁸ Weismayer suggests that, ‘the basis of *communio* is both sacramental (especially in the Eucharist) and juridical’, by which the author means it relates to episcopal authority.²⁷⁹ Rahner emphasises the holiness of God’s people and unity in the Holy Spirit, supported by grace, which becomes the basis on which interaction between the faithful takes place.²⁸⁰ The Christian life includes relationships with Church members on the earth and with those who are “in Christ”, who have already reached the goal of irrevocable communion with Christ’.²⁸¹ For the faithful, it is both an inspiration and a gift of God in which the earthly Church and the heavenly Church are united through God’s grace and mutual help. Christians on earth can help by interceding for the deceased and asking for the intercession of those already with the Lord. The unity of the earthly and heavenly Church is an expression of the *communio sanctorum*.²⁸²

The word *ūniō* is also used in relation to the Church, which ‘is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of

²⁷⁷ Molinari, “Svatý,” 950.

²⁷⁸ Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Teologický slovník* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2009), 369–70.

²⁷⁹ Josef Weismayer, *Život v plnosti. Dějiny a teologie duchovního života* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1994), 67.

²⁸⁰ See Rahner and Vorgrimler, *Teologický slovník*, 370.

²⁸¹ Weismayer, *Život v plnosti*, 67.

²⁸² On the analysis of eschatological questions see also Michal Altrichter, *Specifické otázky z eschatologie* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2015).

the unity of the whole human race' (LG 1, cf. RH 7).²⁸³ This ecclesial emphasis is fundamental to John Paul II's reflections on holiness. It also invokes the ecclesial awareness of Pope Paul VI and his appeal for 'self-awareness' in the Church,²⁸⁴ which John Paul II later develops in *Redemptor Hominis* (RH 3). This notion forms the Christological core of his encyclical, where he restates the conciliar expression 'By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, in a certain way united himself with each man' (GS 22; RH 13). John Paul goes on to further develop the idea of GS 22:

Jesus Christ is the chief way for the Church. He himself is our way 'to the Father's house' (cf. Jn. 14:1) and is the way to each man. On this way leading from Christ to man, on this way on which Christ unites himself with each man, nobody can halt the Church. This is an exigency of man's temporal welfare and of his eternal welfare. (RH 13)

In this statement, it is evident that the Pope shapes the Christological character of holiness by taking Jesus as his starting point and proceeds from Christ to human beings. The Pope adds that 'the Church, therefore, sees its fundamental task in enabling that union to be brought about and renewed continually' (RH 13). In this case, he expresses union as *ūnitās*, a word that brings with it an ecclesial tinge.

Interestingly, however, in contrast to the Council, which tends to use the word *ūniō* for 'union with Christ' (LG 3),²⁸⁵ John Paul II uses a different Latin word to better express the depth of the union, and this is the word *coniūctiō*:

This union of Christ with man is in itself a mystery. From the mystery is born 'the new man', called to become a partaker of God's life (2 Pt. 1:4), and newly created in Christ for the fullness of grace and truth (cf. Eph. 2:10; Jn. 1:14, 16). Christ's union with man is power and the source of power, as Saint John stated so incisively in the prologue of his Gospel: '(The Word) gave power to become children of God' (Jn. 1:12). (RH 18)

The term *coniūctiō* expresses not only union itself but, more obviously, the aspect of mutual love, an image of the union of a man and a woman, or of friendship.²⁸⁶ The use of

²⁸³ 'in Christo veluti sacramentum seu signum et instrumentum intimae cum Deo unionis totiusque generis humani unitatis.' Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, para. 1.

²⁸⁴ Paul VI, "*Ecclesiam Suam*," 6 August 1964, paras. 10, 18, ff., Vatican.va.

²⁸⁵ 'All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains.' Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, para. 3.

²⁸⁶ A nineteenth-century dictionary defines *coniūctiō* variously as: 'a joining together'; 'family connection, relationship'; 'connection by friendship, friendship, intimacy'. John Tahourdin White, *A Latin-English Dictionary*, 4th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1872), 377.

this term may indicate an intention on the part of the Pope to make the nature of his union with Christ more explicit. The term *coniunctiō* is, however, used when the Council speaks of the union of the Mother with Christ (LG 60).

Referring to the mystery concerning Christ's sacrifice, John Paul II speaks of Christ as a gift from the Father and also of another gift: 'the gift that is the Holy Spirit, through whom the divine life that the Father has in himself and gives to his Son (Cf. Jn. 5:26; 1 Jn. 5:11) is communicated to all men who are united with Christ' (RH 20). Here the Pope again uses the term *coniunctiō* (*hominibus, qui Christo coniunguntur*) to highlight the aspect of God's love for and friendship with people.

This aspect of God's love for and friendship with human beings brings us to the consideration that union with Christ takes on both a personal and an ecclesial character. Through the grace of baptism (RH 20), a Christian becomes a member of the 'community of disciples' (RH 21) and embarks on a journey of holiness that will lead to union with Christ. According to John Paul II, the emphasis is therefore mainly ecclesial, when the Church, that is, Christ and his disciples, the Head and the Body, form a complementarity. Within this process, the salvation of individual disciples is realised. John Paul thus emphasises the fundamental matter that to be holy as an individual is to be holy in the Church.

In *Redemptor Hominis*, the Pope elaborates on the theme of the Eucharist in line with the sacrament of penance, and thus emphasises an ecclesial understanding of the eucharistic life:

The Eucharist is the most perfect Sacrament of this union. By celebrating and also partaking of the Eucharist we unite ourselves with Christ on earth and in heaven who intercedes for us with the Father (Heb. 9:24; 1 Jn. 2:1) but we always do so through the redeeming act of his Sacrifice, through which he has redeemed us, so that we have been 'bought with a price' (1 Cor. 6:20). (RH 20)

The Eucharist is the place of the most profound encounter with Christ. In this context, and in association with the sacrament of penance,²⁸⁷ for which he uses the two terms 'penance' and 'reconciliation', John Paul II develops the subject of conversion (RH 20), an essential aspect of the spiritual life. The word 'conversion' (Greek *metanoia*; Latin

²⁸⁷ The naming of this sacrament varies, but 'the one called the sacrament of penance and reconciliation is preferred (as in the Catechism of the Catholic Church). Penance combines the elements of conversion and confession, while reconciliation evokes forgiveness and a complete return to a life of grace.' Paolo Giglioni, *Svatosti Krista a cirkev* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1996), 104.

conversio) represents an internal change, ‘the biblical *metanoia*; primarily any sort of religious or moral transformation, especially the radical venture of entrusting oneself to God and his gracious guidance by a radical and fundamental religious act.’²⁸⁸ John Paul II repeatedly appeals for conversion. He refers to Jesus’ words, ‘Repent, and believe the gospel’ (Mk. 1:15 NJB),²⁸⁹ and that ‘the Eucharist and Penance thus become in a sense two closely connected dimensions of authentic life in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel, of truly Christian life.’ (RH20).

The Pope adds: ‘The Christ who calls us to the Eucharistic banquet is always the same Christ who exhorts us to penance and repeats his ‘Repent’ (Mk. 1:15)’ (RH 20). By participating in the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance, Christians contribute to cultivating union with Christ, that is, to cultivating a life of holiness on both a personal and an ecclesial dimension. John Paul II appeals to the necessity of conversion²⁹⁰ and reminds us of the repeated prompting of Jesus. He is convinced that ‘without this constant ever-renewed endeavour for conversion, partaking of the Eucharist would lack its full redeeming effectiveness and there would be a loss or at least a weakening of the special readiness to offer God the spiritual sacrifice (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5) in which our sharing in the priesthood of Christ is expressed in an essential and universal manner’ (RH 20).

Continual conversion is a matter of God’s grace and human cooperation and can rightly be considered an essential aspect of union with Christ, that is, of living in holiness.²⁹¹ However, John Paul II does not shy from suggesting that Redemption and the Eucharist are nonetheless mysteries for us (RH 20). In this context, he reminds us that ‘it is by the command of Christ himself, her Master, that the Church unceasingly celebrates the Eucharist, finding in it the “fountain of life and holiness”,²⁹² the efficacious sign of grace and reconciliation with God, and the pledge of eternal life’ (RH 7).

Why does the Pope suggest that union with Christ – constant conversion with eyes fixed on Christ and an intense life of Eucharist and Penance – is so crucial for understanding and living holiness? Spinello underlines that ‘we must interpret this

²⁸⁸ Rahner, *Dictionary of Theology*, 97.

²⁸⁹ *New Jerusalem Bible*, accessed 10 October 2020, <https://bit.ly/3qyP3Hu>.

²⁹⁰ I have written about continual conversion as a specific aspect of holiness according to the trinitarian encyclicals of John Paul II in Magda Bušková, “Teologie single-žen. Spiritualita a poslání s otevřenou perspektivou,” in *Učednice každodennosti. Perspektivy katolické spirituality žen v současném světě*, ed. Vojtěch Mašek (Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2019), 45–73.

²⁹¹ The topic of continual conversion as the aspect of holiness in the view of St John Paul II was analysed in the study reflecting conversion in the Trinitarian group of his encyclicals. Magda Bušková, “Conversion as the Path to the Recovery of Humanity in the Context of St John Paul II’s Theology of Holiness,” *AUC THEOLOGICA* 11, no. 1 (2021): 109–128, <https://doi.org/10.14712/23363398.2021.6>.

²⁹² Cf. Litany of the Sacred Heart.

Revelation Christologically, however, given Christ's primacy, for we must "constantly aim at Him" (RH 7).²⁹³ Therefore, the Christological character of holiness expressed as union with Christ can be considered the base line of the interpretation of holiness according to St John Paul II.

4.2.2. A Merciful Father God and the Christological Concept of Holiness

When reflecting on the Christological character of holiness, it is essential to be aware of who Jesus is. Who is the Jesus with whom the Christian is united. Who is the One whom the Christian follows as a disciple? Who is the One to whom the Christian is to be increasingly conformed? The answers will be sought mainly in the Trinitarian encyclicals of John Paul II because in them the Pope underscores that the Christian life is a life with Jesus and with the Trinity of God. How can John Paul's interpretation of holiness and union with Christ be understood in relation to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, and does he emphasise any significant aspects?

The fundamental idea that John Paul II brought in *Redemptor Hominis* is followed up in *Dives in Misericordia* (Rich in Mercy), and this is 'the truth about man, a truth that is revealed to us in its fullness and depth in Christ' (DM 1). He then develops this statement in line with his aim 'to draw attention once again in Christ to the countenance of the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Cor 1:3)' (DM 1).²⁹⁴ This theme links essentially the two encyclicals of the Trinitarian cycle.

John Paul II returns to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council throughout *Dives in Misericordia* and repeatedly to *Gaudium et Spes*, especially to GS 22:

Christ the new Adam ... fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his lofty calling, and does it 'in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love.' (GS 22). The words that I have quoted are clear testimony to the fact that man cannot be manifested in the full dignity of his nature without reference - not only on the level of concepts but also in an integrally existential way - to God. Man and man's lofty calling are revealed in Christ through the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love. (DM 1)

²⁹³ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 79.

²⁹⁴ This subchapter is based mainly on the thematic elaboration of the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* in my rigorous thesis. Bušková, "The Theology of Holiness According to St John Paul II in the Encyclicals of His Pontificate," 52–66.

John Paul stresses the need to unite both ‘the anthropocentric’ and ‘the theocentric’ focus of the Church, and ‘more it must be confirmed and actualized theocentrically, that is to say, be directed in Jesus Christ to the Father’ (DM 1). Jesus is the One who reveals the Father, the One who teaches us to live in relationship with the Trinity and to grow in love as a human being and as a Christian. Spinello believes that in *Dives in Misericordia* the Pope ‘makes more explicit the relationship between Trinitarian theology and anthropology. To be made in the Triune God’s image in Jesus Christ is to be made for love and self-donation.’²⁹⁵

Can we identify any personal motivations or experiences of the Pope that prompted or contributed to his reflections on God the Father and his love? *Dives in Misericordia* begins with a verse from the Gospel of John: ‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ (Jn. 14:9). These words suffuse the whole document, which is dedicated to mercy, love, justice, and conversion as reconciliation with the God Father. Weigel believes that the encyclical was based on the Pope’s meditations on matters relating to paternity in his personal life, that is, his relationship with his father and with Cardinal Sapieha, which ‘had given him a profound experience of both familial and spiritual paternity.’²⁹⁶ According to Weigel, the themes in *Dives in Misericordia* also stem from his close spiritual relationship with Sister Faustina Kowalska (1905–1938), whom he canonised on 30 April 2000.²⁹⁷ One key spiritual dimension borne from this source is that of mercy. The theme of mercy is clear throughout the encyclical, in which John Paul II manifests his extraordinary fatherly love for all the suffering and the sinners, like a true shepherd who has the salvation of all people close to his heart, as it was with the Master Model of Christ.

The encyclical had its origins in the time when ‘Karol Wojtyla was first introduced to the message of divine mercy while he was a seminarian in Krakow,’²⁹⁸ and was offering retreats at the convent of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy where Sister Kowalska lived. Wojtyla never met her personally as she died of tuberculosis at the age of thirty-three,²⁹⁹ but her ‘life and witness’ had a profound spiritual influence on the future pope and eventually resulted in the encyclical on divine mercy.³⁰⁰ The influence of this Polish

²⁹⁵ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 86.

²⁹⁶ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 387.

²⁹⁷ Kowalska was canonised as the first saint of the new millennium. Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 80.

²⁹⁸ Spinello, 80.

²⁹⁹ Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*, 145.

³⁰⁰ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 80.

mystic and nun is central to the theme of the encyclical.³⁰¹ She is well known for her mystical experiences and the personal revelation from Christ that led her to the task of spreading the message of his divine mercy through prayer,³⁰² and for a painting of Christ called 'Jesus, I trust in you'.³⁰³ She recorded her experiences in a diary,³⁰⁴ and these were checked and verified during the beatification process. She excelled in a life of virtue, diligence and humility, of contemplation of Christ and His mercy, and of extraordinary compassion for the suffering of other people. She was proclaimed Patron of Divine Mercy and is also known as the 'Apostle of Divine Mercy'.³⁰⁵ At her canonisation, John Paul II recalled the richness of divine mercy and his message in *Dives in Misericordia*. He used the occasion to cross over, with the Church and the world, to the new millennium, and issued the call to turn to divine mercy in order to face, through love, whatever difficulties would present themselves:

Divine Mercy reaches human beings through the heart of Christ crucified: 'My daughter, say that I am love and mercy personified', Jesus will ask Sr Faustina (*Diary*, p. 374). Christ pours out this mercy on humanity through the sending of the Spirit who, in the Trinity, is the Person-Love. And is not mercy love's 'second name' (cf. *Dives in misericordia* 7), understood in its deepest and most tender aspect, in its ability to take upon itself the burden of any need and, especially, in its immense capacity for forgiveness?³⁰⁶

John Paul II thus sees turning to divine mercy as an essential character of the Christian life and of a life of holiness in its Trinitarian dimension.³⁰⁷

One fundamental aspect of the Christian life of holiness that John Paul highlights is a relational understanding of life with Christ and union with him. It is a relationship with

³⁰¹ For more on how John Paul II was inspired by Sister Kowalská, see Christoph Schönborn, *Nalezli jsme milosrdenství* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2010), 9–21.

³⁰² The spiritual experiences recorded in her diary also contain 'the special religious service and the description of the vision of Divine Mercy ... She spread the crown of prayers to Divine mercy, reverence for Divine mercy (3 p.m.), the feast of Divine Mercy (1st Sunday after Easter).' Hynek Rulíšek, 'Faustyna Kowalská', *Slovník křesťanské ikonografie. Postavy / Atributy / Symboly* (České Budějovice: Karmášek, 2006).

³⁰³ Machejek, 'Faustyna Kowalská', 291.

³⁰⁴ Faustina Kowalska, 'Diary. Divine Mercy in My Soul' (Misericordia Publications, 2020), accessed 10 October 2020, <https://www.saint-faustina.org/diary-full-text/>.

³⁰⁵ Kowalska, 'Diary', 5.

³⁰⁶ John Paul II, 'Homily of the Holy Father. Mass in St Peter's Square for the Canonization of Sr Mary Faustina Kowalska', 30 April 2000, Vatican.va.

³⁰⁷ It is worth noting that on the day of the death of John Paul II, on 2 April 2005, 'the Feast of the Divine Mercy has begun to be celebrated during the liturgy, which he had incorporated into the liturgical calendar on the Sunday after Easter, thus fulfilling the explicit request made by Jesus himself seventy years earlier to Faustina Kowalska.' Oder, *Why He Is a Saint*, 159–60.

Christ, with the Trinity of God. The starting points of the encyclical treats the revelation and the incarnation of mercy: ‘Through this “making known” by Christ we know God above all in His relationship of love for man: in His “philanthropy” (Tit 3:4)’ (DM 2). There is a constant emphasis on the relationship of love, both figuratively and concretely, as, for example, the deep reflection on the loving acceptance of the sons by their father (DM 5–6), which transmits to us the image of a loving Father God. The relationship between the one who is close to us, who is our friend, develops when that person is in frequent contact with us, sharing their life, their worries and their joys. Friends and loved ones give each other their trust. Thus, John Paul II emphasises the trust and the aspect of authentic life according to the Gospel when he points out the need for an approach to God in which ‘the openness to Christ, who as the Redeemer of the world fully reveals man himself, can only be achieved through an ever more mature reference to the Father and His love’ (DM 1). Regarding union with Christ, then, the more one is with Him, the more one is open to Him, the deeper the union and relationship with Him and with the God Father, which is always accompanied by God’s grace.

One possible approach of this exploration, from the perspective of spiritual theology, of the concept of holiness as union with Christ, is the gift of being with which God the Father blessed creation, and the gift for every person to become a child of God through Christ, the Redeemer. Again, John Paul II introduced these fundamental themes in *Redemptor Hominis* and developed them in *Dives in Misericordia*. A key verse of Scripture in this respect can be found in the letter to the Ephesians:

Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ, so that we would be holy and without fault before him. Because of his love God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his sons and daughters – this was his pleasure and purpose. (Eph 1:4-5; cf. John 1:12)

John Paul II links union with Christ and mercy, stating that ‘revelation and faith teach us not only to meditate in the abstract upon the mystery of God as ‘Father of mercies’, but also to have recourse to that mercy in the name of Christ and in union with Him’ (DM 2). In such a context, the Pope develops the idea of union where mercy is manifested in ‘Christ and through Christ’, and he even designates Christ himself as mercy (DM 2).

In order to express the character of God, the Father’s grace to the human person of a life realised with the Holy Trinity, a life that leads to the eschatological fulfilment, John

Paul uses the term ‘gratuitous’ (Latin *gratuitus*), in the sense of an unmerited gift, like a mother’s love, or the love of God: ‘From the deep and original bond – indeed the unity – that links a mother to her child there springs a particular relationship to the child, a particular love. Of this love one can say that it is completely gratuitous, not merited’ (DM 4). In Christian spirituality, the gratuitous character of holiness includes acts of mercy, self-giving, loving self-sharing, grace, ‘good done for others’ (DM 14), forgiveness. Holiness is a gift by which God encourages Christians to respond by following Christ. However, Christians do not always respond adequately because the attachment to sin is ever present (DM 13). This can also be viewed from the perspective of how a Christian receives Christ in baptism. Subjectively, the gift of holiness will be received in a certain way; objectively, holiness is simply a gift. This approach can also be applied to the ecclesial dimension. The holy and sinful Church is a widely discussed topic. Castellucci, for example, reflects on such a paradox in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, mainly from the perspective of the Swiss theologian Charles Journet.³⁰⁸ Pope Francis has expressed it as follows: ‘In the Church, holy yet made up of sinners, you will find everything you need to grow towards holiness. The Lord has bestowed on the Church the gifts of scripture, the sacraments, holy places, living communities, the witness of the saints and a multifaceted beauty that proceeds from God’s love.’³⁰⁹

Mercy as a ‘gratuitous’ gift leads to the development of union with Christ and therefore to the development of holiness. John Paul II first explores the subject using the Parable of the Prodigal Son, especially the behaviour and character of the father: ‘The father’s fidelity to himself is totally concentrated upon the humanity of the lost son, upon his dignity. This explains above all his joyous emotion at the moment of the son’s return home’ (DM 6). Out of mercy, the father embraces the son. The Pope develops his exploration of the gratuitous character of holiness through a discussion of the cross of Christ and the ‘Paschal Mystery’ (DM 7–9). As with John Paul II’s repeated emphasis, meditating on Christ³¹⁰ and the fulness of his suffering opens the door to mercy:

³⁰⁸ Castellucci concludes that ‘the Council fluctuates in its expressions between different theological positions and does not always express itself clearly and unambiguously. On the one hand, it avoids the formal designation of the church as “sinful”, on the other hand, it is not limited to a statement that would highlight the holiness of the church and attribute sinfulness to her “sons”: sin really touches the church, enters its “interior”, and therefore requires its reform, constant purification and renewal’. According to Castellucci, the Swiss theologian went further ‘in the “division” between the ideal church and the people living in the world, between mystery and history, for which Journet was criticised and not for no reason.’ Castellucci, ‘Zjevím na nich svou svatost před očima všech národů’, 33.

³⁰⁹ Francis, ‘Gaudete et Exsultate’, 15.

³¹⁰ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 82.

The cross of Christ on Calvary stands beside the path of that admirable commercium, of that wonderful self-communication of God to man, which also includes the call to man to share in the divine life by giving himself, and with himself the whole visible world, to God, and like an adopted son to become a sharer in the truth and love which is in God and proceeds from God. (DM 7)

Christians who are used to regularly meditating on the suffering of Christ can be gifted essentially for an understanding of mercy and living with Christ, with the Holy Trinity. When a person's eyes are fixed on Christ on the cross, mercy appears as a response in the devoted follower, especially as a response to the suffering in the world: 'In the whole revelation of mercy through the cross, could man's dignity be more highly respected and ennobled, for, in obtaining mercy, he is in a sense the one who at the same time "shows mercy"?' (DM 8). The application of mercy in the life of every Christian and in the Church, according to the Model of Christ, is to live out mercy in everyday life, especially in these times of global challenges (DM 11, 12). Mary, 'the Mother of Mercy', helps us to understand, receive and apply mercy more fully. She is 'the one who obtained mercy in a particular and exceptional way, as no other person has ... [and] was called in a special way to bring close to people that love which He had come to reveal: the love that finds its most concrete expression vis-a-vis the suffering, the poor, those deprived of their own freedom, the blind, the oppressed and sinners' (DM 9).

One vital aspect of the gratuitous character of holiness as it relates to mercy is 'good done to others', but this demands an equilibrium wherein the donor is also the recipient. In this context, the Pope reflects on the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy' (Matt 5:7). Furthermore:

In reality the One who gives is always also a beneficiary.... In this sense Christ crucified is for us the loftiest model, inspiration and encouragement. When we base ourselves on this disquieting model, we are able with all humility to show mercy to others, knowing that Christ accepts it as if it were shown to Himself (Matt 25:34-40). (DM 14)

John Paul II interprets the practice of mercy as a gift and task for every Christian and for the Church: 'The Church professes the mercy of God and proclaims it' as its mission (DM 13): 'On the basis of [the model of Christ crucified] we must also continually purify all our actions and all our intentions in which mercy is understood and practiced in

a unilateral way, as a good done to others' (DM 14). Achieving the necessary equilibrium is possible only when we see the countenance of the Father in the countenance of Christ (DM 1), which is immeasurable love and mercy:

At the same time, 'equality' of people through 'patient and kind' love (1 Cor 13:4) does not take away differences: the person who gives becomes more generous when he feels at the same time benefitted by the person accepting his gift; and vice versa, the person who accepts the gift with the awareness that, in accepting it, he too is doing good is in his own way serving the great cause of the dignity of the person; and this contributes to uniting people in a more profound manner. (DM 15)

In his analysis of mercy, the Pope is encouraging people not to be passive in their attitude to suffering, but to seek dynamic ways to realise mercy and so develop holiness in their daily lives. Every Christian has their own gifts (charisms) for others.³¹¹ Redemption restores 'the creative power in man thanks also to which he once more has access to the fullness of life and holiness that come from God. In this way, redemption involves the revelation of mercy in its fullness' (DM 7).

4.2.3. The Invisible Father God Becomes Visible in Christ

This section will go deeper into the verse with which the Pope opens the encyclical: 'He who sees Me sees the Father' (Jn. 14:9). This will help to identify the spiritual aspect of holiness as union with Christ and enable an understanding of how, in the Pope's interpretation, the 'invisible' becomes 'visible' (DM 2) in Christ, and how to apply that understanding:

It is precisely here that 'His invisible nature' becomes in a special way 'visible,' incomparably more visible than through all the other 'things that have been made': it becomes visible in Christ and through Christ, through His actions and His words, and finally through His death on the cross and His resurrection. (DM 2)

The Pope takes a Christological approach, which becomes the centre of every Christian spirituality, whether priestly, religious, lay, conjugal, or other. The Christological

³¹¹ Aviad Kleinberg, *Histoires de saints. Leur rôle dans la formation de l'Occident* (Mesnil-sur-l'Estrée: Gallimard, 2005), 17–23. See also 1 Cor. 12.

character of mercy means that ‘He Himself, in a certain sense, is mercy. To the person who sees it in Him – and finds it in Him – God becomes “visible” in a particular way as the Father who is rich in mercy (cf. Eph 2:4)’ (DM 2). Holiness is a paradox: it is a mystery within ‘the divine dimension of the redemption’ (RH 9), but it also becomes visible through the person of Jesus.

The Pope is clearly drawing on the theology of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Lumen Gentium* and its stated aim ‘to bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church’ (LG 1). Boublík suggests that the ‘invisible’ character of the Church ‘can be recognised only by the eyes of faith (for example the unity of the faithful with Christ realised in the Holy Spirit is not recognised by the intellect, but by the eyes of faith).’³¹² Alongside its invisible character, he also distinguishes, ‘the visible manifestations of the “marks” of the Church (for example, the mysterious unity of the faithful with Christ is manifested “visibly” in worship, where all the faithful realise a visible communion around the altar).’³¹³

The Church and all Christians witness to the holiness in Christ. To realise holiness means to make the Gospel visible and in so doing make visible ‘the countenance’ of Christ and God the Father in the Holy Spirit. This applies equally to the ecclesial and the personal dimension. Christ ‘transforms’ (DM 14) the Christian and the Church invisibly on the inner, spiritual level, and this enables people to recognise Christ’s mercy and his countenance. Being transformed by Christ also leads the faithful to an external testimony to him and to the Gospel through the spreading abroad of peace, love, mercy, compassion for a suffering world, and the courage to stand up for justice, and thus to make known to the world the face of Christ and of the Father. This requires Christians to remain in Christ and make him the centre of their lives. In his exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis nonetheless warns against over-prioritising human effort:

The same power that the gnostics attributed to the intellect, others now began to attribute to the human will, to personal effort. This was the case with the pelagians and semi-pelagians. Now it was not intelligence that took the place of mystery and grace, but our human will. It was forgotten that everything ‘depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy’ (Rom 9:16) and that ‘he first loved us’ (cf. 1 Jn 4:19).³¹⁴

³¹² Vladimír Boublík, *Boží lid*, Teologie (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 1997), 167.

³¹³ Boublík, 167–68.

³¹⁴ Francis, ‘Gaudete et Exsultate’, 48.

Francis goes on to warn against saying to those in need, even in good faith, that ‘all things can be accomplished with God’s grace, [when] deep down they [are giving] the idea that all things are possible by the human will, as if it were something pure, perfect, all-powerful, to which grace is then added.’³¹⁵ He calls this ‘a will lacking humility’.³¹⁶

4.3. Holiness and the Kingdom of God

One key aspect of John Paul II’s interpretation of holiness and the need for a ‘new evangelisation’ is his interpretation of the kingdom of God. But is the term ‘kingdom of God’ applicable to today’s Christians and their spirituality? Is it not rather an abstract term and thus not appropriate or sufficiently transferable to everyday life? Moreover, how does the kingdom of God relate to the path of holiness? We will explore these questions through the lens of John Paul II’s concept of a holiness that is rooted in union with Christ.

4.3.1. The Context of the Kingdom of God and Union with Christ

First, it seems helpful to point out various perspectives on the biblical concept of the kingdom of God. In *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, Seal identifies the different terms used in the Old Testament, such as ‘the kingdom of God’, the ‘kingdom of the Lord’, and ‘kingdom of Heaven’, and states that:

Three primary themes about God’s kingdom emerge in biblical and extrabiblical literature:

- the everlasting duration of the kingdom;
- its present and tangible aspects in the lives of the ancient Israelites;
- the belief in a future appearance of a superior and more comprehensive kingdom of God.³¹⁷

Similarly, Rahner notes that in the New Testament two terms are used, ‘the kingdom of God’ (Greek βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ / *basileia tú theú*) and ‘the kingdom of Heaven’ (Greek βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν / *basileia tón úranón*), with the word “heaven” as a late Jewish

³¹⁵ Francis, para. 49. Pope Francis also emphasises that ‘only on the basis of God’s gift, freely accepted and humbly received, can we cooperate by our own efforts in our progressive transformation.’ Francis, para. 56.

³¹⁶ Francis, “Gaudete et Exsultate,” para. 49.

³¹⁷ David Seal, “Kingdom of God,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry (Bellingham: Lexham Press, n.d.), <https://app.logos.com/>.

descriptive of God's name, the central concept of the biblical message of salvation.³¹⁸ According to Rahner, most Jewish conceptions of the kingdom of God had a prevailing eschatological character and another aspect as a result of the 'victory of Messiah on the earth'. Rahner insists that in the New Testament:

The kingdom of God is the summary core of Jesus' preaching: in Jesus, in his action (overcoming demons), the kingdom of God has come near (Mark 1:15 and other par.), and with it, the salvation of men. It is brought near to all, but especially to the underprivileged and declassed ones. The kingdom of God is the summary of all human joys (kingdom of God = banquet, wedding feast).³¹⁹

Rahner and Seal agree that the centre of what Jesus proclaimed and did is the kingdom of God.³²⁰ In his detailed analysis of New Testament concepts of the kingdom of God, Seal notes that 'Jesus does not define the kingdom of God; He describes it only through parables. There are numerous parables in Matthew, Mark and Luke, which open with the phrase "the kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven) is like ..."' (e.g., Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:26-29; 30-32; Luke 13:18-19, 20-21).³²¹ Seal suggests that 'what is unique to Jesus' teaching is the claim that the kingdom (in some sense) had actually arrived.'³²² Rahner also points to the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt. 13:31-32), in which he distinguishes between the kingdom of God which is 'already present', and a future matter 'for which the Christian is to ask, and for which the Church at the Our Father prayer asks (Mt. 6:10).'³²³ The Christological character and eschatological character are interwoven here when 'the Church calls for repentance (*metanoia*) and faith, which are prerequisites for the kingdom of God, preparing the ground for following Jesus, which is a condition for participation in the kingdom of God.'³²⁴

Among the fourteen encyclicals of John Paul II, the term 'kingdom' appears most often in *Redemptoris Missio*, the encyclical on missions. Most of the 80 references to the term in this encyclical appear in the form 'kingdom of God' (RMi 13, 14 ff), and there is a clear emphasis here, as there is in *Gaudium et Spes*, on the Christological character of the kingdom: 'The kingdom of God is not a concept, a doctrine, or a program subject to

³¹⁸ Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, "Království Boží," in *Teologický slovník* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2009), 179. (My translation.)

³¹⁹ Rahner and Vorgrimler, 179. (My translation.)

³²⁰ Rahner and Vorgrimler, "Království Boží" (my translation); Seal, "Kingdom of God."

³²¹ Seal, "Kingdom of God."

³²² Seal.

³²³ Rahner and Vorgrimler, "Království Boží," 179.

³²⁴ Rahner and Vorgrimler, 179.

free interpretation, but it is before all else *a person* with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God' (RMi 18; GS 22). Spinello remarks here that 'the Kingdom which is not a place but the reign of God, is not man's doing but God's.'³²⁵ He also mentions the Pope's ecclesial emphasis, that 'the Church also has a solemn duty to realize the Christ's Kingdom, which is promised in the Gospel proclamation.'³²⁶ Miller comments that 'above all, the Pope wishes to emphasize that the Kingdom cannot be separated from Christ or the Church; it is indissolubly united to both.'³²⁷ John Paul suggests that some views or understandings of the kingdom of God miss the point, and offers examples of 'ideas about salvation and mission which can be called "anthropocentric" in the reductive sense of the word, inasmuch as they are focused on man's earthly needs' (RMi 17). For John Paul, the kingdom is wholly Christocentric: 'The first Christians also proclaim "the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5; cf. Rev 11:15; 12:10), or "the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pt. 1:11)' (RMi 16). In his concern to revive a biblical understanding of the concept of the kingdom of God for the modern world, John Paul II insists that:

The preaching of the early Church was centered on the proclamation of Jesus Christ, with whom the kingdom was identified. Now, as then, there is a need to unite the proclamation of the kingdom of God (the content of Jesus' own "kerygma") and the proclamation of the Christ-event (the "kerygma" of the apostles). The two proclamations are complementary; each throws light on the other. (RMi 16)

John Paul II is striving here for doctrinal integrity. He is returning to the New Testament roots and the tradition of the Church for a proper understanding of the kingdom of God in order to enable the updating of a fundamental theme for the present day. In this sense, too, we perceive here an application of the conciliar *aggiornamento*.

Because the Pope's focus on interpreting the kingdom of God is ecclesial, the concept can appear in some ways more abstract. He suggests that '*The universal call to holiness* is closely linked to the *universal call to mission*. Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission' (RMi 90). The call is, furthermore, rooted in baptism (RMi 71), which makes it the task of all the laity in the Church (RMi 71). John Paul II also deals in detail with the assignment of the laity for holiness and for mission and

³²⁵ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 191.

³²⁶ Spinello, 183.

³²⁷ J. Michael Miller, ed., *The Encyclicals of John Paul II* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996), 482.

proclaiming Jesus as the ‘Good News’ in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*.³²⁸ Here, as in *Redemptoris Missio*, he stresses the connection between holiness and mission: an authentic life of holiness is a prerequisite for proclaiming the kingdom of God to the unbaptised and the baptised as a believable and credible witness of Christ (RMi 90, 91; CL 14, 54).

However, does John Paul II provide a more concrete understanding of the kingdom for the Christian’s journey of holiness in the sense of deeper union with Christ? How does the Pope deal with this matter? Early in his public ministry, Jesus speaks about the kingdom of God in the following terms: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel’ (Mk. 1:15 NJB) (RMi 13). John Paul II states that ‘Jesus himself is the “Good News” ... The kingdom which Jesus inaugurates is the kingdom of God. Jesus himself reveals who this God is, the One whom he addresses by the intimate term “Abba,” Father’ (cf. Mk. 14:36) (RMi 13). Here is an opening for a personal relationship with God, a relationship characterised by complete trust and love, as the accepted child of God enjoys the intimacy of a relationship built on prayer. One view of the concreteness of living and proclaiming the kingdom of God can be seen in the Beatitudes (Mt. 5:1-12):³²⁹ ‘The missionary is a person of the Beatitudes. Before sending out the Twelve to evangelize, Jesus, in his “missionary discourse” (cf. Mt 10), teaches them the paths of mission: poverty, meekness, acceptance of suffering and persecution, the desire for justice and peace, charity – in other words, the Beatitudes, lived out in the apostolic life’ (RMi 91). Amato suggests that the Beatitudes ‘constitute a code of Christian holiness’.³³⁰ Jesus uses them to translate his teachings into concrete realisations of the path of holiness.

Drawing on biblical and conciliar teaching, John Paul II reminds us that ‘salvation, which always remains a gift of the Holy Spirit, requires man’s cooperation, both to save himself and to save others’ (RMi 9). Why does the Pope repeatedly emphasise the need for awareness of salvation for eternal life with God when for Christians it is the ‘clear’ goal of their lives? What we see here is an emphasis on the ‘synergism’ of the works of the Holy Spirit and the works of people, something which in contemporary language we

³²⁸ John Paul II, “*Christifideles Laici*,” 30 December 1988, Vatican.va.

³²⁹ Two of the Beatitudes refer directly to the kingdom: ‘Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!’ (Mt. 5:3); ‘Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires; the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!’ (Mt. 5:10).

³³⁰ Angelo Amato, “Beatifikační a kanonizační procesy. Kritéria, průběh, význam,” *Communio, Mezinárodní katolická revue*, n.d., 49.

might call ‘teamwork’. Such an emphasis on synergism avoids the pitfalls of one-sided views, of excluding a person’s own involvement in shaping their life on the path of holiness or of overestimating and prioritising only one’s efforts to grow spiritually and arrive at salvation. The Pope also states:

The temptation today is to reduce Christianity to merely human wisdom, a pseudo-science of well-being. In our heavily secularized world a ‘gradual secularization of salvation’ has taken place, so that people strive for the good of man, but man who is truncated, reduced to his merely horizontal dimension. (RMi 11)

Miller notes the Pope’s warning regarding an incorrect understanding of the kingdom of God, what Miller calls ‘secular interpretation[s] of the Kingdom’: ‘Mission then would be aimed at promoting human development rather than leading people to conversion and baptism.’³³¹ According to spiritual theology, three dimensions of a Christian life of faith and holiness can be distinguished: the vertical dimension of the relationship between God and an individual Christian; the horizontal dimension of the relationship between God, individual Christians and the Church; and the third dimension that includes all these and the whole of the world.³³² In his analysis of imperfect understandings of the kingdom of God, John Paul II identifies only the horizontal earthly dimension of life³³³ and the vertical dimension of a person’s relationship with God and its eschatological goal. The matter of incorporating an understanding of the kingdom of God in the life of the Christian is so important to John Paul that he devotes an entire chapter to it in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (chapter II, para. 12–20).

How does the Pope draw together union with Christ and Christian participation in spreading the kingdom of God? Here he comes with the perspective of God’s love and mercy, where ‘entry into the kingdom comes through faith and conversion (cf. Mk. 1:15)’ (RMi 13). Conversion is one of John Paul II’s significant and recurring emphases in the

³³¹ Miller, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 482.

³³² Weismayer distinguishes at least four dimensions of the spiritual life: ‘life before God and with God’, ‘life in the communion of the Church and life with other people’, the dimension of ‘life in the middle of the world’, and a dimension that relates to life as a pilgrimage with ascetic aspects. Weismayer, *Život v plnosti*, 79–176.

³³³ Regarding John Paul II’s approach, Nachev comments that ‘the reduction of man to a horizontal scale of human values is an ideology that severs him from the essential relationship with the transcendental Christ transforming the proclamation and witness of faith into an element of exclusively human and social liberation. That approach is not the answer for man’s relationship with God in the world.’ The eschatological aspect of life needs to be incorporated. Antoine Nachev, *The Mystery of the Trinity in the Theological Thought of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 156.

context of holiness. In the encyclicals, this is a particular feature in *Dives in Misericordia*, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, *Redemptoris Missio* and *Ut Unum Sint*. The Christian is called to participate in spreading the kingdom of God, the growth of which John Paul II attributes to the trust built from a life lived in interior prayer and in seeking and doing what pleases God (RMi 13). Here, the will and willingness on the part of the person are assumed: an active-contemplative approach. Nevertheless, John Paul II also stresses that ‘the disciples recognize that the kingdom is already present in the person of Jesus and is slowly being established within man and the world through a mysterious connection with him’ (RMi 16). Although various aspects of union with Christ, and therefore of holiness, are pointed out, it is all still something of a mystery.

4.3.2. Liberation

As will be clear by now, John Paul II repeatedly emphasises the importance of understanding the matter of union with Christ. He gives several reasons why missions are essential for the Church and for the world and insists that ‘true liberation consists in opening oneself to the love of Christ. In him, and only in him, are we set free from all alienation and doubt, from slavery to the power of sin and death’ (RMi 11). In the Pope’s insistence on ‘In him, and only in him’ we hear an echo of GS 22, that people are more human the more they come to know themselves in Christ. Again, we see a Christological character: union with Christ liberates the human person. Can it be said that in the context of the kingdom of God, liberation appears as one possible description of the way of holiness?

The kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society, and the world. Working for the kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God’s activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms. (RMi 15)

It is clear from this statement that spreading the kingdom concerns human beings in their personal relationship with God and other people, the whole Church and society. Therefore, the question must be asked, How does this idea of ‘working for liberation from evil in all its forms’ relate to Christian holiness interpreted as union with Christ?

From the biblical point of view, liberation is closely connected with the kingdom of God and with Jesus’ public ministry:

Jesus went all over Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Good News about the Kingdom, and healing people who had all kinds of disease and sickness. The news about him spread through the whole country of Syria, so that people brought to him all those who were sick, suffering from all kinds of diseases and disorders: people with demons, and epileptics, and paralytics – and Jesus healed them all. (Mt. 4:23-24)

In the Gospels, Jesus liberates people from sickness and evil: he healed a paralysed man (Mt. 9:1-8); two blind men (Mt. 9:27-31); a boy with an evil spirit (Mk. 9:14-29), and many others. This theme of healing and liberation is one that St Paul often refers to: ‘For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead, the Spirit makes you God’s children, and by the Spirit’s power we cry out to God, “Father! My Father!”’ (Rom. 8:15; GS 22). John Paul II frequently invokes this passage from Romans, especially in the encyclicals. We also come across it in GS 22, which speaks of about Christ, ‘the new Adam’, who brings freedom from the bondage of evil and sin.

The devil tempted Jesus in the desert (Lk. 4:1-14; Mt. 4:1-11), and Jesus’ disciples and followers are not spared from the difficulties of a spiritual struggle. For Christians, the Apostle Paul warns about such struggles in his letter to the Ephesians: ‘Put on all the armour that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against the Devil’s evil tricks. For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age’ (Eph. 6:11-12). However, the Christian is not alone in this struggle, and the apostle exhorts people to develop ‘strength in union with the Lord and by means of his mighty power’. In the armour of God, Christians have a complete package of protective devices (and weapons) at their disposal (Eph. 6:13-18).

The topic of evil and sin is a broad one that can be discussed from multiple perspectives, and a full treatment goes beyond the scope of this paper. Here we will confine ourselves to exploring the theme of evil and sin in connection with liberation, holiness, and building the kingdom of God. In the encyclicals of John Paul II, the most significant attention to evil is given in two encyclicals that are focused on the moral teaching of the Church: *Veritatis Splendor*, where the Pope mentions the term ‘evil’ more than 80 times, and *Evangelium Vitae*, which carries the term with an even greater frequency. The theme also appears in *Dominum et Vivificantem* and *Dives in*

Misericordia. The related term ‘sin’ appears most often in *Dominum et Vivificantem*, which deals with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, ‘who “convinces the world concerning sin,” reveals himself and makes himself present in man as the Spirit of eternal life’ (DV 48).

In *Dominum et Vivificantem*, the Pope speaks of evil and sin in the context of threats to Christians and their ‘life in union with God’:

Man’s disobedience, nevertheless, always means a turning away from God, and in a certain sense the closing up of human freedom in his regard. It also means a certain opening of this freedom – of the human mind and will – to the one who is the ‘father of lies’. (DV 37)

John Paul II also reminds us that evil is equated with ‘the spirit of darkness (cf. Eph. 6:12, Luke 22:53)’ (DV 38), and also reflects on various internal and external threats caused by various forms of evil that make people afraid, and make them live in anxiety, fear and sin and therefore turn away from God. Against all this, however, stands the love of Jesus and his repeated exhortation to ‘fear not’ (Lat. *Nolite timere*; Greek *μη φοβεῖσθε* / *mi foveisthe*), whether during his public ministry (Lk. 12:7) or after his resurrection in his encounter with the women at the empty tomb (Mt. 28:10). This call was taken up by John Paul II and expanded to ‘Do not be afraid. Open the doors to Christ, open them wide!’³³⁴ According to Dziwisz, this was ‘the motto to his life and master key to his pontificate.’³³⁵ Holiness interpreted as a sacramental union with Christ in the Holy Spirit, perceived as a task to participate in spreading the kingdom of God, necessarily involves a willingness to deepen faith in a merciful God, help others, and have the courage to face distress from ‘internal divisions’ (RH 14, GS 10), various fears and external threats (RH 15, RH 16).

The Holy Spirit, ‘who is the love of the Father and of the Son, he who is gift’ (DV 35), gives the necessary strength to oppose these threats (DV 58). John Paul stresses that Jesus ‘the Lord himself came to free and strengthen man’ (GS 13, DV 44) and that the Holy Spirit also ‘strengthens’ Christians (DV 58). The Holy Spirit helps to build up their union with Christ in the spiritual struggle and everyday life because the threats can result in a weakening of a person’s unity with Christ and therefore a weakening and fragmentation of a life of holiness on both personal and ecclesial levels.

³³⁴ John Paul II, “Homily of His Holiness John Paul II for the Inauguration of His Pontificate,” 22 October 1978, para. 5, Vatican.va.

³³⁵ Dziwisz, *A Life with Karol*, 70.

Christians need to be continually mindful that love is stronger than sin (DM 8, DV 39) and that ‘true liberation consists in opening oneself to the love of Christ’ (RMi 11). Such an opening of oneself brings liberation: it is a form of cooperation with Christ that promotes a greater ‘humanization of the life’ (RH 14, cf. GS 38) and makes ‘a more human world’ (DV 59, cf. GS 34). Such an approach, and John Paul II’s emphasis on the kingdom of God being ‘before all else *a person* with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God’ (RMi 18, cf. GS 22), leads to reflection regarding how such a gift is to be expressed in a person’s lived experience.

4.4. The New Evangelisation and Its Relation to Holiness

John Paul II is clear that union with Christ is linked to the missionary character of the Christian life. This becomes especially obvious in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (RMi), which ‘has as its goal an interior renewal of faith and Christian life’ (RMi 2). The encyclical follows the conciliar document on missions *Ad Gentes* and Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*³³⁶ (RMi 2). Kaplánek notes that John Paul II came up with ‘the project of the “new evangelization”, which he announced in 1979 as a programme for the whole Church. The model presented by John Paul II is still dominant in the Catholic Church.’³³⁷

But how does the new evangelisation relate to holiness? John Paul II issues a challenge that is still relevant: ‘Today the Church must face other challenges and push forward to new frontiers, both in the initial mission *ad gentes* and in the new evangelization of those peoples who have already heard Christ proclaimed’ (RMi 31). According to Spinello, this encyclical and others such as *Slavorum Apostoli* and *Ut Unum Sint* have a pastoral focus.³³⁸ He reminds us that John Paul II ‘often spoke of a “new evangelization” that would shape the Church’s mission well into the twenty-first century.’³³⁹ According to Dziwisz, the new evangelisation ‘ended up becoming one of the hallmarks of John Paul II’s pontificate. The idea came to him when he noticed – especially during the trips – that

³³⁶ Vatican Council II, *Ad Gentes*; Paul VI, “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*,” 8 December 1975, Vatican.va.

³³⁷ Kaplánek also points out that ‘the word was apparently first used at the 2nd General Assembly of Latin American Bishops in Medellín in 1968.’ Michal Kaplánek, “Měníci se tvář evangelizace v posledních padesáti letech,” *Teologické texty. Časopis pro teoretické a praktické otázky teologie*, no. 1 (2014), <https://www.teologicketexty.cz/casopis/2014-1/Menici-se-tvar-evangelizace-v-poslednich-padesati-letech.html>. (My translation.)

³³⁸ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 183.

³³⁹ Spinello, 183.

there was a really urgent need to reinvigorate the churches in the old Christian countries.³⁴⁰ Regarding mission, the Pope re-emphasises the redemptive role of Jesus Christ, and opens chapter 1 of the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* with his words ‘No one comes to the Father except by me’ (Jn. 14:6, RMi 4). With reference to 1 Tim. 2:5-7, he strengthens Christ as *Unicus Mediator* and as the only Saviour (Lat. *Iesus Christus unicus Salvator*) (RMi 4 ff.), and states that ‘no one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit’ (RMi 5). The Pope also reminds us that ‘God’s plan is “to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10)’ (RMi 6), and that Christ is in the ‘intimate union with the Father’ (RMi 11). He makes a clear link between the missionary task and holiness:

Missionary cooperation is rooted and lived, above all, in personal union with Christ. Only if we are united to him as the branches to the vine (cf. Jn. 15:5) can we produce good fruit. Through holiness of life every Christian can become a fruitful part of the Church’s mission. (RMi 77)

In John Paul II’s view, then, personal union with Christ, and thus a life of holiness, provides the basis, direction and spiritual nourishment for missions, and thus for the new evangelisation.

John Paul II continues on the theme of the new evangelisation in 2003 in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (EEcl).³⁴¹ Dziwisz suggests that the Pope’s efforts began with Europe ‘because the Continent was gradually drifting further and further from its roots, and so from its history and culture. He thus believed it was necessary to go back to the sources of the faith in order to give the mission of evangelization new dynamism.’³⁴² Here, we are reminded of what John Paul expressed in *Sources of Renewal* regarding the Second Vatican Council and the conciliar *aggiornamento* or ‘return to the original sources’. However, is this topic of the new evangelisation, albeit inspired by the Council, not simply a matter of theory? Dziwisz insists that it is not:

Karol Wojtyla ... had a predisposition to what I like to call ‘Gospel freshness.’ In other words, he always tried to start the renewal process with himself. His main method was reading the Gospel.

³⁴⁰ Dziwisz, *A Life with Karol*, 159.

³⁴¹ John Paul II, “*Ecclesia in Europa*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Jesus Christ Alive in His Church. The Source of Hope for Europe,” 28 June 2003, Vatican.va.

³⁴² Dziwisz, *A Life with Karol*, 159.

He read Holy Scripture daily until the very end of his life. It was Scripture that constantly reignited his great impatience to spread Christ's message around the world. To spread the message and, at the same time, to strengthen faith where it already existed.³⁴³

The Pope practised what he preached. He lived out his insistence on beginning with oneself, on daily dwelling with the Lord, where the source of strength, peace and truth is, in order that the Christian can realise his life's mission in Christ, a mission which has both a personal and an ecclesial character.

Regarding the new evangelisation, Brown and O'Reilly explore John Paul's interpretation of 'the experiential dimension of faith'.³⁴⁴ The authors point to the Pope's emphasis on the disquieting situation in Europe. They rightly draw attention to the current need to address the theme of evangelisation in today's world, because 'Europe has in recent times become a post-Christian continent. A characteristic trait of contemporary European civilization is an attempt to cultivate "a vision of man apart from God and apart from Christ" (EEcl 9).'³⁴⁵ John Paul II speaks about 'the loss of Europe's Christian memory and heritage' (EEcl 7) and suggests that 'this loss of Christian memory is accompanied by a kind of fear of the future. Tomorrow is often presented as something bleak and uncertain ... We find ourselves before a widespread existential fragmentation' (EEcl 8). He sees the solution in a return to 'hope' in Jesus (EEcl 19) and making this the centre of all life (EEcl 6) on both personal and ecclesial levels (EEcl 48, 49, 71, etc.). He distinguishes between 'a first proclamation' (EEcl 46) and 'a renewed proclamation' (EEcl 47) of the Gospel. The recovery a Christian's faith and life needs to be linked to the authentic life of the Gospel, lived out as Jesus' witnesses (EEcl 49). He also highlights that holiness is 'one fruit of the conversion brought about by the Gospel' (EEcl 14). The whole document, therefore, emphasises personal and ecclesial conversion and has a strong Christological character. The relationship between the new evangelisation and holiness is conditional: 'The presence and the signs of holiness are thus decisive: holiness is the essential prerequisite for an authentic evangelization capable of reviving hope.

³⁴³ Dziwisz, 160.

³⁴⁴ The authors anchor the paper first in the framework of Wojtyła's dissertation *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*, stating that he submits 'a veritable synthesis of subjective faith and objective doctrine. The kind of faith that concerns both St. John and Wojtyła is living faith, that is to say, faith that is informed or animated by charity. While faith is the proximate means of union with God it is so, in the words of Wojtyła, 'only in relation to charity.' Carole M. Brown and Kevin E. O'Reilly OP, "John Paul II and the New Evangelization," *The Heythrop Journal* 58, no. 6 (November 2017): 918, <https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.12131>. Wojtyła, *Faith According to Saint John of the Cross*, 9.

³⁴⁵ Brown and O'Reilly, "John Paul II and the New Evangelization," 926.

What is needed are forceful, personal and communal testimonies of new life in Christ' (EEcl 49). Brown and O'Reilly identify this emphasis on witnessing as an essential aspect in John Paul's teaching on Christian faith, which comes from his personal experience of prayer and living in union with Christ.³⁴⁶

John Paul II is not so much giving specific instructions for personal conversion as encouraging awareness of the need for conversion for the unbaptised and the baptised. He is highlighting the *existential fragmentation* of the human person and contrasting that with the unity of the Church and of Europe (EEcl 3). The Christian's relationship to Christ is expressed as union with him in daily trust, love, and genuine faith in various Christian states of life, whether clergy, religious, or laity. The witness of holiness consists in the lives of canonised and non-canonised Christians, 'who with simplicity and amid the circumstances of their daily lives testified to their fidelity to Christ' (EEcl 14).

For Pope Francis the theme of the new evangelisation is one of the key themes of his pontificate, which he elaborated in 2013 in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.³⁴⁷ Whereas John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* emphasises the witness of Christians to others and the need for a daily conscious life centred in Christ, *Evangelii Gaudium* builds more deeply on the joy of proclaiming the Gospel to others. Francis expresses his concern for his fellow human beings as follows:

The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power of the cross and to put Jesus Christ at the center of our lives. This evangelization should also be marked by a spirit of inclusivity, which reaches out to those who are on the margins of society, the poor, the disabled, and those who are excluded in various ways. It should be attentive to the needs of the world and respond with concrete actions of charity.³⁴⁸

McCosker notes Francis's Christological approach, such as when he 'makes repeatedly clear that the gospel message that brings joy is Jesus Christ. The gospel is not in fact primarily a message, an idea, or even a program of action, but rather a person.'³⁴⁹ However, as is the custom of John Paul II,³⁵⁰ Francis concludes the document by

³⁴⁶ Brown and O'Reilly, 926.

³⁴⁷ Francis, "*Evangelii Gaudium*. Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World," 24 November 2013, Vatican.va.

³⁴⁸ Francis, para. 176.

³⁴⁹ Philip McCosker, "From the Joy of the Gospel to the Joy of Christ: Situating and Expanding the Christology of Pope Francis," in *Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, and the Renewal of the Church*, ed. Duncan J. Dormor and Alana Harris, e-book (New York: Paulist Press, 2017), 64.

³⁵⁰ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 79.

emphasising the significant role and intercession of Our Lady: ‘She is the Mother of the Church which evangelizes, and without her we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization.’³⁵¹

Francis continues his Christological approach in the exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, where in more straightforward language he develops an understanding of holiness in the daily life of the Christian and links this holiness with mission.³⁵² For Francis, holiness is also inextricably linked with joy: ‘The word “happy” or “blessed” thus becomes a synonym for “holy”. It expresses the fact that those faithful to God and his word, by their self-giving, gain true happiness.’³⁵³

What can threaten the new evangelisation? Both popes point to various dangers that limit or hinder efforts towards evangelisation. John Paul II mentions, as noted above, the advancing ‘existential fragmentation’ (EEcl 8) of the human person. Francis speaks of various ‘distractions that are omnipresent in today’s world [and that] also make us tend to absolutize our free time, so that we can give ourselves over completely to the devices that provide us with entertainment or ephemeral pleasures.’³⁵⁴ Francis warns us, however, not to forget to distinguish between entertainment which is only ‘superficial’ and that which ‘opens us to others and to reality itself in a spirit of openness and contemplation.’³⁵⁵ It can be concluded that these examples of the threats to the new evangelisation concern the holiness of the Christian since they can distort or weaken the life of holiness, which grows above all when a life is centred on Christ, in union with Christ and the Church, both on a personal and an ecclesial level. It is an approach that requires the daily conversion of the Christian, which provides a key connection between evangelisation and holiness.

4.5. Conclusion

Using both biblical and conciliar sources, this reflection on the Christological character of holiness focused on Jesus Christ as the ‘perfect man’. It showed that John Paul II’s Christological conception of holiness is also anthropological. The word ‘union’ was explored from the perspective of spiritual theology and in the context of other

³⁵¹ Francis, “*Evangelii Gaudium*,” para. 284.

³⁵² Francis, “*Gaudete et Exsultate*,” paras. 19, 20.

³⁵³ Francis, para. 64.

³⁵⁴ Francis, para. 30.

³⁵⁵ Francis, para. 30.

subjects such as joy, prayer, love and friendship, and the transformative dimension of union with Christ. Reference to this union was explored in several of John Paul II's encyclicals, in which he cultivated the concept of communion with God as union with Christ in the Church through the Holy Spirit, emphasising, therefore, both the ecclesial and the pneumatological character of holiness. Regarding the ecclesial dimension, John Paul II underlines that the Christian realises their journey of holiness in union with Christ and as a member of a 'community of disciples' (RH 21). In relation to the sacrament of penance, the Eucharist is considered the most profound encounter with Christ and is linked to the Pope's appeal for continual conversion to Christ, which is a matter both of God's grace and of human cooperation.

The reflection on mercy and the forgiving love of the Father God brought the insight that the Christian's relationship with Christ is with the One who is the way to Father, who is invisible but gives grace to know him through Christ. John Paul II thereby lays the spiritual foundations of paternity and does this in the context of his exploration of the spirituality of Faustyna Kowalska. He also develops the conciliar teaching on the Trinitarian dimension of the Christian life. He constantly draws attention to the need to meditate, not only in certain situations, moments, or times designated for meditation, but throughout the day. The Pope develops the idea of union where mercy is manifested 'in Christ and through Christ' (DM 2), but also highlights the 'gratuitous' character of holiness. Mercy as a 'gratuitous' gift leads to the development of union with Christ and therefore of holiness. Meditating on Christ and the fullness of his suffering opens the doors of God's mercy and the Trinitarian dimension of the Christian life. The Church and all Christians witness to holiness in Christ. Christ 'transforms' (DM 14) the Christian and the Church invisibly on the inner, spiritual level, leading to the testimony of peace, love, mercy, and compassion for a suffering world with the courage to stand up for justice, as such testimony makes known to the world the face of Christ and of the Father.

The reflection on holiness also raised the question of how John Paul II understands the nature of the kingdom of God and how it is linked to holiness rooted in union with Christ. In the Old Testament, the term kingdom of Heaven is linked with the idea of salvation; in the New Testament, many of Jesus' parables highlight the distinction between the kingdom of God 'already present' and the kingdom that is 'yet to come'. In *Redemptoris missio*, the kingdom of God is described as 'a person with the face and name of Jesus of Nazareth, the image of the invisible God' (RMi18, cf. GS 22). With this comes an emphasis on the kingdom in today's world, but also an echo of the conciliar

aggiornamento. John Paul explores the relationship between union with Christ and the Christian's participation in spreading the kingdom of God in the context of God's love and mercy, which the Christian gains access to through faith and conversion.

One essential aspect of the kingdom of God regarding the context of holiness is liberation from sin and evil. John Paul develops the idea that liberation comes through participation in spreading the kingdom of God, through union with Christ. Liberation is the solution, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to facing a variety of threats and fears. It is the way to open oneself to the love of God and at the same time to participate in creating a more humane world.

A life lived in union with Christ and in relationship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit is intimately associated with John Paul II's urgent appeal for a new evangelisation, especially in the 'declining culture' of Europe, as he reflected in the exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*. He addresses the existential fragmentation of the human person and calls on Christians to renew their faith, to be converted, daily, in both personal and ecclesial dimensions. For John Paul II, the relationship between evangelisation and holiness is associated with the need to bring new testimonies of living a life centred on Christ. Pope Francis affirms this, but also speaks of the joy of proclaiming the Gospel to others.

5. The Holy Spirit and the New Humanity

Beginning with a brief introduction to the encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* (DV), this final chapter will focus on aspects related to holiness as union with Christ ‘in the Holy Spirit’ and will offer a unifying element to the whole study. This part of the reflection on the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of the Pope is based on the chapter of the previous rigorous work, which examined, in particular, the encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*.³⁵⁶ The section on the context of the encyclical provides the background to the sources with which John Paul II works. The perspective on the Holy Spirit and His Mission provides a link with the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament. The reflection then moves on to a focus on spiritual conversion in the context of sin and love. The Holy Spirit is analysed as a life-giving force. The chapter goes on to explore the identified triple aspect of the path of holiness and concludes with a consideration of the Virgin Mary as an exemplary witness.

5.1. A Brief Introduction to *Dominum et Vivificantem*

The following brief insight will not concentrate on the entire content of the encyclical, but rather on aspects related to this study, especially union with Christ in the Holy Spirit.³⁵⁷

5.1.1. Background to the Encyclical

Dominum et Vivificantem (‘The Lord and Giver of Life’), the fifth encyclical of John Paul II (published on 18 March 1986), combines ecclesial and pneumatological emphases and opens with the words: ‘The Church professes her faith in the Holy Spirit as “the Lord, the giver of life”’ (DV 1). The document ‘on the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World’,³⁵⁸ to give it its full title, completed the Trinitarian group of encyclicals, written over a period of seven years. Weigel notes, however, that ‘when he began writing

³⁵⁶ Bušková, “The Theology of Holiness According to St John Paul II in the Encyclicals of His Pontificate,” 67–85.

³⁵⁷ Spinello, for example, has comprehensively analysed the document. See Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 86–94.

³⁵⁸ John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 18 May 1986, accessed 10 October 2020, Vatican.va.

Redemptor Hominis shortly after his election, John Paul II did not think of his inaugural encyclical as the first panel of a Trinitarian triptych, a three-part reflection on the mystery of God as Holy Trinity.³⁵⁹ However, the teaching in *Redemptor Hominis* and *Dives in Misericordia* naturally ‘led to a reflection on the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son to continue the risen Christ’s redeeming and sanctifying work.’³⁶⁰ Therefore, the encyclical on the Holy Spirit can be considered the peak of his reflections on the Holy Trinity. However, it is still ‘a mystery – a reality that the human mind cannot ever fully comprehend.’³⁶¹ Weigel repeatedly emphasises the fact that John Paul II develops his encyclical as a meditation,³⁶² but adds that it ‘is the longest, most complex meditation on the Holy Spirit in the history of the papal teaching office.’³⁶³ Spinello also speaks of the encyclical as a meditation, even speaking of it as an ‘original and provocative meditation on the Holy Spirit’s role in the Church.’³⁶⁴ Regarding its content, the Pope ‘does not discuss the infinitely complex issue of how the Persons of the Trinity are related.’ Rather, it is better to say that the encyclical ‘is written by a theologically informed pastor looking to rekindle devotion to the Holy Spirit in his people, not by a professor seeking to win a debate.’³⁶⁵

Looking through the whole encyclical, the Pope is knowingly building on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, especially *Gaudium et Spes* (such as GS 24) and *Lumen Gentium*, with the intention of developing ‘in the Church the awareness that “she is compelled by the Holy Spirit to do her part towards the full realization of the will of God, who has established Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world”’ (DV 2). The Pope underlines the fact that ‘the teaching of this Council is essentially “pneumatological”’: it is permeated by the truth about the Holy Spirit, as the soul of the Church’ (DV 26). The ‘pneumatological character’³⁶⁶ that John Paul II expresses several times in the encyclical is also highlighted by his efforts to get the Church ready for the year 2000 and beyond: ‘The great Jubilee ... has a directly Christological aspect: for it is

³⁵⁹ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 386.

³⁶⁰ Weigel, 386.

³⁶¹ Weigel, 516.

³⁶² Weigel, 517. Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 94.

³⁶³ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 517.

³⁶⁴ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 94.

³⁶⁵ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 516. Weigel also points out that it ‘is less a theological argument than an exhortation to the Church to take more seriously the Third Person of the Trinity, The Holy Spirit, in preparing for the Great Jubilee of 2000’. Weigel, 516.

³⁶⁶ The term refers to the Greek ‘*pneuma*’. According to Müller, ‘the theological concept of “the Holy Spirit” returns to the biblical usage: *ruach* in Hebrew; *pneuma* in Greek; *spiritus sanctus* in Latin’. Gerhard Ludwig Müller, *Dogmatika pro studium i pastoraci* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2010), 395.

a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. At the same time, it has a pneumatological aspect, since the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished “by the power of the Holy Spirit” (DV 50). He also considers the pneumatological character in the context of St Paul’s teaching, which in addition to ethical and ontological dimensions has a dimension that is ‘pneumatological (the action of the Holy Spirit in the order of grace)’ (DV 55).³⁶⁷

However, in his attempt to show the interconnection between the two characters, one can identify a somewhat obscured hint of the description of holiness, which necessarily presupposes a conscious living with God. In the context of following Christ, the Pope suggests that ‘grace, therefore, bears within itself both a Christological aspect and a pneumatological one, which becomes evident above all in those who expressly accept Christ’ (DV 53). What can he mean by this emphasis on expressive acceptance of Christ? Does not the Christian accept Him in baptism? John Paul might here be referring to the questions the Christian should ask: Have I really believed in Christ? Do I consciously and daily live with Christ and follow him in my *thoughts, words and deeds*? It refers again to the consciously lived life of holiness in close union with God in its concreteness.

The Pope continually guides his readers to *Gaudium et Spes* – repeatedly turning to God’s saving love for people and the commandment to love (GS 24) – and *Lumen Gentium*, particularly regarding the Holy Spirit sent by Christ ‘on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father’ (LG 4; cf. DV 1, 3, 25). The core of the Pope’s reflection is the ‘completing’ work of the Holy Spirit, or rather his ‘new mission’ (DV 22) in the world, which brings the need to implant this idea into daily life on both personal and ecclesial levels.

The encyclical consists of a brief introduction (DV 1–3) and three main chapters. It opens with the words of the Creed and recalls that: ‘The Church professes her faith in the Holy Spirit as “the Lord, the giver of life” and brings attention to its expression in the Creed that ‘the Holy Spirit “has spoken through the Prophets”’ (DV 1).³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Pospíšil deals with Trinitarian theology and in terms of the pneumatology of St Paul, also states that ‘the experience with the work of the Holy Spirit is very clear in them, as evidenced by the fact that we encounter in them a total of 146 occurrences of the word “pneuma”. The characteristics of this pneumatology include indications of the divine status and personality of this Spirit’. Ctirad Václav Pospíšil, *Jako v nebi, tak i na zemi. Náčrt trinitární teologie* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2007), 205.

³⁶⁸ The Pope does not omit to note on it as ‘Nicene-Constantinopolitan from the name of the two Councils – of Nicaea (A.D. 325) and Constantinople (A.D. 381)’ (DV 1). On the confession of faith in the Holy Spirit, see also ‘Catechism of the Catholic Church’, 683–747.

John Paul II repeatedly turns to biblical sources, such as when he refers to Jesus' description of the Holy Spirit as 'water': 'the inexhaustible source of the "water welling up to eternal life," (John 4:14) as truth and saving grace' (DV 2); and as 'living water' (John 7:37-39), and emphasises the Church's faith in the Holy Spirit 'as the giver of life, the one in whom the inscrutable Triune God communicates himself to human beings, constituting in them the source of eternal life' (DV 1), a faith based on the event of Pentecost and the apostolic history (DV 1).

Divinum Illud Munus, the encyclical of Leo XIII on the Holy Spirit³⁶⁹ (hereafter DIM), served as an essential source for John Paul in developing his pneumatology (DV 2). Leo XIII presents his interpretation of the Holy Trinity, especially of the Holy Spirit, to increase interest in and 'devotion' to the Holy Spirit (DIM 2). Pope Leo uses biblical sources and mainly the interpretations of St Thomas Aquinas and St Augustine, emphasising the ecclesial and personal nature of faith in the Holy Spirit: 'For He not only brings to us His divine gifts but is the Author of them and is Himself the supreme Gift, who, proceeding from the mutual love of the Father and the Son, is justly believed to be and is called "Gift of God most High."' (DIM 9). Leo also reminds us that the recovery of the human person, the 'new person', originates in baptism (DIM 9). The terms used in the Bible and the father's work, such as 'new creatures, partakers of the Divine Nature, children of God', demonstrate that the 'great blessings are justly attributed as especially belonging to the Holy Ghost' (DIM 8). Concerning the golden thread of this study, that is, union with Christ, the encyclical brings its Trinitarian description in the context of the 'indwelling' of God in the soul of a human being, who, however, is righteous:

God by grace resides in the just soul as in a temple, in a most intimate and peculiar manner. From this proceeds that union of affection by which the soul adheres most closely to God, more so than the friend is united to his most loving and beloved friend, and enjoys God in all fulness and sweetness. Now this wonderful union, which is properly called 'indwelling,' differing only in degree or state from that with which God beatifies the saints in heaven, although it is most certainly produced by the presence of the whole Blessed Trinity—"We will come to Him and make our abode with Him," (John xiv. 23.) - nevertheless is attributed in a peculiar manner to the Holy Ghost. (DIM 9)

Leo XIII also reminds us of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which every soul needs for the path of holiness. This might also have been an inspiration for John Paul II, who

³⁶⁹ Leo XIII, *Divinum Illud Munus*, 9 May 1897, accessed 10 October 2020, Vatican.va.

underscores the necessity to pray to the Holy Spirit for those gifts, stating that ‘thanks to the multiplicity of the Spirit’s gifts, by reason of which he is invoked as the “sevenfold one,” every kind of human sin can be reached by God’s saving power’ (DV 42). John Paul not only expounded this approach, but also lived it himself, making prayer for the gifts of the Holy Spirit an integral part of his daily prayer.³⁷⁰

Inspired by Leo XIII and the Second Vatican Council, in the encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* John Paul II aims to ‘penetrate ever deeper into the Trinitarian mystery of God himself, through the Gospels, the Fathers and the liturgy: to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit’ (DV 2). The references in chapter 1 are mainly from the Gospel of John and refer first to Jesus’ ‘promise and Revelation at the Last Supper’:

Jesus addressed the Apostles with these words: ‘Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.... I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.’ (John 14:13.16.17) ... It is precisely this Spirit of truth whom Jesus calls the Paraclete – and parakletos means ‘counselor,’ and also ‘intercessor,’ or ‘advocate.’ And he says that the Paraclete is ‘another’ Counselor, the second one, since he, Jesus himself, is the first Counselor’ (cf. 1 John 2:1) ... [He will] continue in the world, through the Church, the work of the Good News of salvation. (DV 3)

The reflections are elaborated, however. John Paul II often reminds us that holiness, life with God, will always be a mystery that invites us to ever deeper discovery and union with Him: ‘the mystery of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit ... perhaps in no passage of Sacred Scripture finds so emphatic an expression as here’ (DV 3). Although the Pope reminds us, as we saw in Chapter 3 of this thesis, that the encyclical is a meditation, this approach is mentioned only three times (DV 2, 54, 64) and is not expressly set out or developed in this encyclical on the Holy Spirit, where it rightly has a significant place.

5.1.2. The Holy Spirit and His Mission

The Pope submits titles for the Holy Spirit from the Gospel of John and presents the Holy Spirit chiefly as the ‘Spirit of truth’ (*Spiritus veritatis*) (DV 3, 5), the Spirit-Counselor (*Spiritus-Consolator*) (DV 4, 8), and the Spirit-Paraclete (*Spiritus-Paraclitus*)

³⁷⁰ He states that ‘Saint Thomas Aquinas explains how, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, a person’s whole spiritual being becomes responsive to God’s light, not only the light of knowledge but also the inspiration of love. I have prayed for the gifts of the Holy Spirit since my youth and I continue to do so.’ John Paul II, *Gift and Mystery*, 73.

(DV 4, 7). He also mentions another title, ‘the Spirit of Holiness’, in the context of the resurrection of Jesus in the Epistle to the Romans 1:3f. (DV 24) or ‘the Spirit who is love and gift’ (DV 39). Reflecting on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church, the Pope repeatedly returns to the words of Jesus:

‘But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you’ (John 14:26). (DV 4)

‘When the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning’ (John 15:26–27). (DV 5)

How does the Pope work with these biblical statements? He repeatedly returns to them, and they play a significant part in his interpretation of the role of the Holy Spirit. He draws three essential aspects of the Holy Spirit that build the ecclesial and personal characters of the path of holiness: the Holy Spirit ‘will teach’; ‘will bring to your remembrance’; and ‘will bear witness’ (DV 4, 7). The reflection on these three aspects represents the love of God for human beings and brings more light on the necessity of making life a constant meditation. However, it also provides an appeal to reflect on these three aspects as aspects of holiness that the Pope presents in the context of the Christian life with the Trinity and the essential role of the Holy Spirit.

John Paul notes the distinction between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who are ‘clearly called Persons, the first distinct from the second and the third, and each of them from one another’ (DV 8). Regarding this, Spinello comments that ‘the Spirit of Truth, therefore, is a Person, not some sort of impersonal force.’³⁷¹ The emphasis on the perception of the Holy Spirit as a person can be read throughout the encyclical and forms the essential character that the Pope seeks to bring to the mind and life of the Christian. Concerning Jn. 16:7, John Paul stresses that ‘the relationship of interdependence which could be called causal between the manifestation of each: “If I go, I will send him to you.” The Holy Spirit will come insofar as Christ will depart through the Cross’ (DV 8). The coming of the Holy Spirit is conditional upon the cross (DV 11).

³⁷¹ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 87.

The Pope suggests that the passage in Isaiah 11:1-3³⁷² is vital to ‘the pneumatology of the Old Testament because it constitutes a kind of bridge between the ancient biblical concept of “spirit,” understood primarily as a “charismatic breath of wind,” and the “Spirit” as a person and as a gift, a gift for the person’ (DV 15). As a link to the New Testament, John Paul recalls that Jesus’ messianic mission in the Holy Spirit was revealed by John the Baptist at the River Jordan and by the words from heaven, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’ (Matt 3:17), which was ‘a Trinitarian theophany which bears witness to the exaltation of Christ’ (DV 19).³⁷³ From within the ‘Paschal Mystery’, John Paul II explains that:

The Holy Spirit is first sent as a gift for the Son who was made man, in order to fulfil the messianic prophecies ... The Holy Spirit ‘will come’ directly (it is his new mission), to complete the work of the Son. Thus, it will be he who brings to fulfilment the new era of the history of salvation. (DV 22)

On the Council’s contribution to the spiritual life of the Church, the Pope notes that ‘the Council has made the Spirit newly “present” in our difficult age’ (DV 26). However, although 37 years have passed since the encyclical was written, its call for a better understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit is all the more relevant in light of the recent Covid pandemic, which brought increased numbers of poor and hungry people, as Pope Francis has pointed out,³⁷⁴ or the current war in Ukraine. Is the Church aware of this need to call for more intense co-operation and a more fervent relationship with the Holy Spirit so that life is lived with the Trinity and we endure as Christians?

5.1.3. The Context of Sin and Love

The Pope’s reflection on sin is mainly within chapter 2 of the encyclical (DV 27–48). It is based on Jesus’ words concerning the role of the Holy Spirit: ‘I will send him to you,

³⁷² See DV 15: ‘Alluding to the coming of a mysterious personage, which the New Testament revelation will identify with Jesus, Isaiah connects his person and mission with a particular action of the Spirit of God – the Spirit of the Lord. These are the words of the Prophet: “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be the fear of the Lord.” (Isaiah 11:1–3)’.

³⁷³ Spinello notes that ‘this moment represents the first full revelation of the Trinitarian mystery’. Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 88.

³⁷⁴ Francis, “Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Fifth World Day of the Poor,” November 14, 2021, para. 5, Vatican.va.

and when he comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment' (John 16:7-8) (DV 27). The obvious aim here is to properly interpret Jesus' words: 'sin' is regarded in the context of people's behaviour towards Jesus: 'sin means the rejection of his mission, a rejection that will cause people to condemn him to death'; 'righteousness' is defined as: 'definitive justice, which the Father will restore to him when he grants him the glory of the Resurrection and Ascension into heaven' (DV 27); 'judgment' relates to the Evil one (DV 27), 'the one who is a liar and "the father of all lies"' (John 8:44; DV 27).

The primary focus of the chapter is the 'mission of the Holy Spirit, which is "to convince the world concerning sin," but at the same time respecting the general context of Jesus' words in the Upper Room' (DV 28). It leads to the intention of the mission of the Holy Spirit which is 'to continue in the world the salvific work of Christ' (DV 27).

On the one hand, one can perceive an emphasis on universality, meaning salvation for every person, in the Pope's interpretation. John Paul II presents 'the universality of the Redemption' and sees the matter as essential to a right understanding of sin: 'every sin wherever and whenever committed has a reference to the Cross of Christ' (DV 29, 32). On the other hand, he also pays special attention to ecclesial matters, with references to his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (Reconciliation and Penance. On Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today).³⁷⁵

Why is the Pope so concerned to make the Christian familiar with the concept of sin in relation to the Holy Spirit? He is aware that even in the new millennium we are moving into a 'new era with the Holy Spirit' (DV 22), and there needs to be a heightened awareness of sin and God's love guided by the Holy Spirit on both ecclesial and personal levels. The Pope presents us with the challenge of conversion through the Holy Spirit. The key word 'sin' is used here more than 190 times. The teaching on the Holy Spirit and his witness is based on 'the Testimony of the Day of Pentecost' (DV 30–32).

In addition, John Paul II is not afraid to deal more in depth with the inner life of the Christian and the Christian's formation by the Holy Spirit. He considers it a fundamental theme, out of which a conversion is explored which 'requires convincing of sin; it includes the interior judgment of the conscience, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in man's inmost being' (DV 31). There are two dimensions to the comprehensive process at work in the human conscience: its exploration or mediation as

³⁷⁵ John Paul II, 'Reconciliatio et Paenitentia. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today', 2 December 1984, accessed 10 October 2020, Vatican.va.

‘the intimate mystery of man’, but also as ‘the inner mystery of God, those “depths of God” that are summarized thus: to the Father – in the Son – through the Holy Spirit’ (DV 32). The Holy Spirit has a central role in conversion, and conversion is considered ‘an indispensable condition for the forgiveness of sins [which] is brought about by the influence of the Counselor’ (DV 42). The carefully developed study of the conscience is partly drawn from the conciliar teaching of *Gaudium et Spes*: ‘conscience is “the most secret core and sanctuary of a man, where he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths” (GS 16)’ (DV 43). It is essential that Christians are aware of ‘the sin against the Holy Spirit’ (DV 46). John Paul further emphasises that ‘the dangerous sin against the Spirit will give way to a holy readiness to accept his mission as the Counselor’ (DV 47).

The Old and New Testaments speak of the same Spirit of love: ‘He himself, as love, is the eternal uncreated gift’ (DV 34). The term gift in the context of the Holy Spirit has a vital place in the theology of John Paul II: ‘Against a background of [the gift of] the “image and likeness” of God,³⁷⁶ “the gift of the Spirit” ultimately means a call to friendship’ (DV 34). Such references echo the teaching of the Council fathers in *Dei Verbum* on Jesus’ addressing his disciples as ‘friends’, such as in John 15:14-15³⁷⁷ (DV 34). The aspect of friendship and ‘intimacy’ (DV 59) with God can often be identified in the spirituality of the saints. St Theresa of Jesus, for example, is known for this form of relationship with God³⁷⁸ and speaks of friendship in the context of mercy and prayer:

If one perseveres (in prayer) I trust then in the mercy of God, who never fails to repay anyone who has taken the mercy of God, who has taken Him for a friend ... for mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us. In order that love be true and the friendship endure, the wills of the friends must be in accord.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Commenting on the Trinitarian group of encyclicals, Spinello suggests that ‘all three encyclicals affirm that man images God not just as a free, rational subject but as a being in relation, made for interpersonal communion with God and others’. Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 90.

³⁷⁷ Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, 18 November 1965, para. 2, accessed 10 October 2020, Vatican.va.

³⁷⁸ Pope Francis also refers to St Theresa’s description of prayer as a matter of friendship and intimacy, and adds that ‘trust-filled prayer is a response of a heart open to encountering God face to face, where all is peaceful and the quiet voice of the Lord can be heard in the midst of silence’. Francis, ‘Gaudete et Exsultate’, 149.

³⁷⁹ Kieran Kavanaugh OCD and Otilio Rodriguez OCD, trans., *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila. The Book of Her Life.*, vol. 1 (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1987), 96.

It can be concluded that the ‘call to friendship’ is also essential for unity with Christ (DV 34). Furthermore, people are called ‘to participate in truth and love. This participation means a life in union with God’ (DV 37).

It is not surprising that the Pope repeatedly brings the statement that ‘love is stronger than sin’, as he did in *Dives in Misericordia*, and demonstrates that ‘love can reveal itself in the history of man as stronger than sin. So that the “gift” may prevail!’ (DV 39; cf. DM 8). In this context, the Christian is to carry out their path of holiness by accepting God’s call and developing a desire to ‘live by the Spirit, accepting and corresponding to his salvific activity’ (DV 56). Both acceptance and desire come to the human heart through the Holy Spirit.

However, this is not without obstacles, for, as the Pope makes clear, it is related to the Pauline theology of the struggle between human nature and the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:17, cf. DV 56), meaning that we do what we do not want to do, and we do not do what we want to do. This is a realisation in the daily practice of life and prayer, and the necessity of spiritual struggle is to be reckoned with the acceptance of God’s call. It can be interpreted as the acceptance of the path of holiness accompanied by personal continual conversion, and ‘those who are converted, therefore, are led by the Holy Spirit out of the range of the “judgment,” and introduced into that righteousness which is in Christ Jesus, and is in him precisely because he receives it from the Father, (John 16:15) as a reflection of the holiness of the Trinity’ (DV 48). This all leads to the extraordinary intention to highlight the ecclesial and personal awareness that ‘he is called to participate in truth and love. This participation means a life in union with God’ (DV 32), and it is a conscious life with the Holy Trinity.

5.1.4. The Holy Spirit Transforms Humanity

John Paul II also addresses the theme from the perspective of ‘the Holy Spirit who gives life’ (DV 49–67). Reflecting first on ‘Christ, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit’ (DV 49), the Pope analyses the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, whose ‘narrative[s] of the birth and infancy of Jesus of Nazareth express themselves on this matter in an identical way’ (DV 49).³⁸⁰ The Pope recalls that ‘from the beginning the Church confesses the

³⁸⁰ The Pope refers to Lk. 1:34-38 and Mt. 1:18, 20-21.

mystery of the Incarnation, this key-mystery of the faith, by making reference to the Holy Spirit' (DV 49), and uses this reflection to introduce the subject of 'the Great Jubilee':

[which] has a directly Christological aspect: for it is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. At the same time, it has a pneumatological aspect, since the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished "by the power of the Holy Spirit." It was "brought about" by that Spirit – consubstantial with the Father and the Son – who, in the absolute mystery of the Triune God, is the Person-love, the uncreated gift. (DV 50)

The essential term explored here is 'fullness of time', which is 'matched by a particular fullness of the self-communication of the Triune God in the Holy Spirit' (DV 50). The Pope put great effort into preparing the Church for the new millennium: 'The Church cannot prepare for the Jubilee in any other way than in the Holy Spirit. What was accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit "in the fullness of time" can only through the Spirit's power now emerge from the memory of the Church' (DV 51).

On the subject of the Holy Spirit as the One who gives life (DV 51), John Paul offers the example of Mary, in whom the Holy Spirit brought about 'the beginning of her divine Motherhood' (DV 50).

The Pope also encourages meditation on the transcendence of the Holy Spirit, but also an awareness that He is 'close to this world but present in it, and in a sense immanent, penetrating it and giving it life from within' (DV 54). It is a pity that there is not more light shed on *how* to meditate. Of course, this is not a one-off or occasional meditation. The Pope is concerned, rather, to bring meditation into the everyday, as a permanent state, a living and conscious 'breathing', the use of the mind, of prayer, and of experiencing the love of the Holy Trinity with the help of the Holy Spirit. This might also mean an appeal to do everything as a meditation and to explore what that means. Considering how the Pope presents union with Christ in the Holy Spirit, it can be inferred that such meditation may be a key to deeper union with Christ. Regarding transcendence, the Pope repeatedly returns to the idea of the invisible and the visible which we find in *Dives in Misericordia*: 'in Jesus Christ the divine presence in the world and in man has been made manifest in a new way and in visible form' (DV 54; cf. DM 2).³⁸¹

³⁸¹ In this context, the Catechism underlines that 'it is Christ who is seen, the visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Spirit who reveals him'. 'Catechism of the Catholic Church', 689.

Drawing on the teaching of St Paul in Galatians 5 and Romans 8, the section DV 55–57, which has a distinct anthropological perspective, explores ‘the tension and struggle’ of humankind.³⁸² This description of the Christian’s spiritual and moral struggle stems from the Pope’s initial perspective that ‘God’s coming close and making himself present to man and the world, that marvelous “condescension” of the Spirit, meets with resistance and opposition in our human reality’ (DV 55). Also based on the teaching of St Paul, the Pope mentions those ‘morally good or bad works, or better the permanent dispositions – virtues and vices – which are the fruit of submission to (in the first case) or of resistance to (in the second case) the saving action of the Holy Spirit’ (DV 55). Regarding the Christian’s permanent struggle to walk the path of holiness, it is therefore vital to develop virtues as permanent elements of unifying with Christ in the Holy Spirit. The Pope also continues his strong emphasis on humanism: ‘the Holy Spirit strengthens the “inner man”’ (DV 58); ‘man’s intimate relationship with God in the Holy Spirit also enables him to understand himself, his own humanity, in a new way’ (DV 59). Such expressions echo GS 22, which states that human beings can understand themselves only in the light of Christ. In addition to this, John Paul brings the emphasis that this renewed person is realised through the Holy Spirit as a Teacher (DV 4). Regarding entering the third millennium, it is impossible to miss the Pope’s appeal for the need to accomplish in our world ‘a process of true growth in humanity, in both individual and community life’, which is realised through the Holy Spirit (DV 59). He wants to inspire Christians to become ‘witnesses to man’s authentic dignity, by their obedience to the Holy Spirit’ (DV 60).

As he does in *Dives in Misericordia*, the Pope presents a strong and repeated ecclesial dimension, which he addresses in the section ‘The Church as the sacrament of intimate union with God’ (DV 61–67). He emphasises the fundamental role of the Eucharist in both the personal and ecclesial dimensions: ‘individuals and communities, by the action of the Paraclete-Counselor, learn to discover the divine sense of human life’ (DV 62). Where do we find an emphasis on Christian holiness? It can be identified in the statement that in ‘following the example of the Apostles [and] fervently [striving] to conform their

³⁸² See DV 55: ‘In the texts of St. Paul there is a superimposing – and a mutual compenetration – of the ontological dimension (the flesh and the spirit), the ethical (moral good and evil), and the pneumatological (the action of the Holy Spirit in the order of grace). His words (especially in the Letters to the Romans and Galatians) enable us to know and feel vividly the strength of the tension and struggle going on in man between openness to the action of the Holy Spirit and resistance and opposition to him, to his saving gift’.

thinking and action to the will of the Holy Spirit' (DV 62), always remembering that 'together with the Spirit, Christ Jesus is present and acting' (DV 64).

5.2. Aspects of Holiness in *Dominum et Vivificantem*

This study aims to explore how a person unites with Christ in the Holy Spirit. Such unification is a process, a transformation that enables a human being to be continually renewed in Christ, even though the renewed status of that person was received at baptism (RH 20). As noted above, three aspects of the activity of the Holy Spirit are repeatedly identified by John Paul II: He will teach; He will bring to your remembrance; He will bear witness (DV 4, 7). This *triple aspect* opens up both the human and the divine dimensions of holiness.³⁸³ Personal and spiritual characters are both included. The encyclical presents very clearly the concept of love: the word 'love' is used more than 80 times. The description of the Holy Spirit includes 'love' in DV 21, 34, 37, 39, 41, and here in DV 10: 'the Holy Spirit, being consubstantial with the Father and the Son in divinity, is love and uncreated gift ... the gift of grace to human beings through the whole economy of salvation'. The triple aspect mentioned above is therefore intimately bound up with the concept of love and can be seen as integral to the path of holiness.

5.2.1. The Holy Spirit as Teacher

John Paul II reflects on the role of the Holy Spirit as 'teacher' (DV 4)³⁸⁴ in both the personal and the ecclesial dimension. Here he draws on the words of Jesus: 'But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.' (John 14:26). The encyclicals in the Trinitarian group are linked by this Trinitarian statement, which the Pope repeatedly returns to and develops as vital to an understanding of the path of holiness: the Father sends the Holy Spirit after Jesus departs (DV 11); the Holy Spirit comes and teaches in the name of Jesus Christ (DV 11) and represents 'the new beginning of God's self-communication to man in the Holy Spirit' (DV 14). In these statements, one

³⁸³ There is an allusion here to the Council Fathers, who encouraged Christians to 'hold on to and complete in their lives this holiness they have received' (LG 40). The Pope's emphasis on the Holy Spirit first teaching then reminding and bearing witness in the Christian life suggests an ascending line of holiness, but at the same time a process whose layers intertwine and penetrate from one to another.

³⁸⁴ See also Leo XIII, *Divinum Illud Munus*, 1.

can perceive the emphasis on God's all-embracing love and mercy, the concern for human beings that is typical of this pope. Further, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (DV 22), who 'will be the Counselor of the Apostles and the Church, always present in their midst – even though invisible – as the teacher of the same Good News that Christ proclaimed ... [and] will ensure that in the Church there will always continue the same truth which the Apostles heard from their Master' (DV 4).

What are the principal aspects of the teaching of the Holy Spirit? John Paul presents that the Holy Spirit will: 'inspire the spreading of the Gospel of salvation', 'help people to understand the correct meaning of the content of Christ's message', and 'ensure continuity and identity of understanding in the midst of changing conditions and circumstances' (DV 4). The Pope is therefore emphasising that the Holy Spirit teaches Christians how to live in the here and now, in the current living conditions anytime and anywhere, holding Christ at the centre of their lives, and at the same time maintaining an awareness that life is lived together with the Holy Trinity. This is the Pope's essential approach to daily faith and life.

We have noted that John Paul II is concerned that Christians practise continual meditation. Although in this encyclical the Pope does not explicitly note the Christian practice of regular study of and meditation on the Bible, it nonetheless follows from his teaching on the Holy Spirit that the whole encyclical represents a strong appeal to Christians to develop their spiritual lives through meditation on the Scripture, both as individuals and in the church. Such practice is encouraged elsewhere: 'It is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of *lectio divina*, which draws from the biblical text the living word which questions, directs and shapes our lives'.³⁸⁵ Moreover, 'there is no doubt that this primacy of holiness and prayer is inconceivable without a renewed listening to the word of God'.³⁸⁶

The Holy Spirit's place at the centre of church life is vital, especially in the Eucharist (DV 62); the encyclical demonstrates the strongly ecclesial character of the Holy Spirit's teaching. St Paul states: 'no one can confess "Jesus is Lord" without being guided by the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor 12:3). He is 'the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete sent by the Risen Christ

³⁸⁵ John Paul II, 'Novo Millennio Ineunte. Apostolic Letter at the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000', 6 January 2001, para. 39, accessed 10 October 2020, Vatican.va.

³⁸⁶ John Paul II, para. 39.

to transform us into his own risen image' (DV 85).³⁸⁷ Christ meets with the human person through the Holy Spirit, who enables the Apostles and all disciples to be disposed to learning from the Model of Jesus.

How does the Holy Spirit come to a human being? John Paul mentions St Paul's statement that, 'you are his sons and daughters, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts' (Gal 4:6; cf. DV 14). The transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit is realised in the heart of the Christian. Likewise, 'the Triune God, who "exists" in himself as a transcendent reality of interpersonal gift, giving himself in the Holy Spirit as gift to man, transforms the human world from within, from inside hearts and minds' (DV 59). It is the Holy Spirit who enables the Christian's internal transformation. This change continues with the external transformation of the person, in the outward expression of words and deeds. Such a transformation is a 'joint action of human forces and the Holy Spirit'.³⁸⁸ The internal and external processes intertwine and interact, and both flow into a growing union with Christ. The Catechism states that 'Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit abundantly until "the saints" constitute – in their union with the humanity of the Son of God – that perfect man "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13), "the whole Christ," in St. Augustine's expression'.³⁸⁹ On the transformation which conforms the Christian to Christ, the Pope stresses that 'man in his own humanity receives as a gift a special "image and likeness" to God' (DV 34). He also notes the relationship between communion in the church and 'the new life' gifted by the Holy Spirit, which leads a person 'into the supernatural reality of the divine life itself and becomes a "dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit," a "living temple of God" (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19)' (DV 58). It can be inferred that transformation into the image of and likeness to God strengthens the union of the human person with Christ. This is a mystery, but it can also be perceived as the way God helps human beings understand themselves in the light of Christ. The formation of the individual Christian is inseparably linked to communal celebration in the church, at the centre of which is the Eucharist, through which the Christian will 'find himself ... through a ... gift of himself' (DV 62).

At the heart of the spiritual life of the Christian is prayer. Prayer always formed the core of the lives of the saints, as recorded in many of their biographies and works. Prayer therefore represents the personal character of holiness, but it is also an integral part of the

³⁸⁷ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Ioannis Evangelium*, Bk. V, Ch. II: PG 73, 755.

³⁸⁸ Špidlík, *Prameny světla*, 61.

³⁸⁹ 'Catechism of the Catholic Church', 695.

celebration of church life and communion.³⁹⁰ Reflecting on prayer in the life of the church, John Paul II refers to his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (RH 14): ‘united with the Spirit, the Church is supremely aware of the reality of the inner man, of what is deepest and most essential in man, because it is spiritual and incorruptible’ (DV 58). In this context, the Pope is aware of the crucial role of ecclesial prayer in the life of the church.

Although prayer is dealt with only briefly, it is clear that this aspect of the Christian life forms a vital core of the path of holiness, of getting to know oneself fully as a human being, a disciple of Christ, a child of God, as a participant in or even a friend of the Holy Trinity. How can this be realised? The answer lies in ‘dwelling’ with the Holy Trinity in prayer. Here is where Christians complete themselves, where they find fullness of life, the new humanity. In the encyclical, the personal aspect of prayer is viewed in relation to the connection between prayer and the completion of humanity: ‘Prayer through the power of the Holy Spirit becomes the ever more mature expression of the new man, who by means of this prayer participates in the divine life’ (DV 65). The Holy Spirit transforms the humanity of a man. Furthermore, ‘man’s intimate relationship with God in the Holy Spirit also enables him to understand himself, his own humanity’ (DV 59). Prayer as well a continual meditation way of life therefore creates and enables the environment for the formation of such a relationship. The Pope is concerned to point out the existential nature of prayer, which again shows the strong anthropological character of his theology of holiness, which is also Trinitarian.

Pope Leo XIII, on the other hand, in his encyclical on the Holy Spirit, is concerned very much to highlight the importance of the practice of prayer:

We ought to pray to and invoke the Holy Spirit, for each one of us greatly needs His protection and His help. The more a man is deficient in wisdom, weak in strength, borne down with trouble, prone to sin, so ought he the more to fly to Him who is the never-ceasing fount of light, strength, consolation, and holiness.³⁹¹

Pope Francis submits an inspiring perspective on prayer in today’s world, primarily on the ‘constant character’ of prayer, and stresses that ‘holiness consists in a habitual openness to the transcendent, expressed in prayer and adoration. The saints are

³⁹⁰ The place of prayer in the encyclicals of John Paul II would make an interesting piece of research, but one that is beyond the scope of this study.

³⁹¹ Leo XIII, *Divinum Illud Munus*, 11.

distinguished by a spirit of prayer and a need for communion with God'.³⁹² Francis encourages us to search for answers for today's life situations in prayer and adds that '[in] silence, we can discern, in the light of the Spirit, the paths of holiness to which the Lord is calling us.'³⁹³ One essential aspect of prayer for Christians is to remind themselves of all the good they receive in their lives.³⁹⁴ Francis's more practical and everyday use interpretation of prayer in the context of holiness³⁹⁵ is also a product of being offered in an 'exhortation' rather than in an encyclical.

Pope John Paul II's discussion of the Holy Spirit as teacher can be summed up in the simple statement: the Holy Spirit teaches faith. Similarly, the 'triple aspect' of the Holy Spirit – 'teaches, brings to remembrance, bears witness' – could also be summed up in the triplet 'faith, hope, love'.

It can be summarized that the Holy Spirit teaches holiness as union with Christ through the truth of the Good News, unification with Christ in the Eucharist, and all that is involved in teaching Christians how to follow Christ as the Master Model, including a life of prayer and meditation. Holiness as union with Christ therefore has a *pneumatological* character. Because God loves us, the Holy Spirit teaches the Christian and the whole church how to discover *the countenance of the Father in the countenance of Christ* (DM 1), as described in the previous chapter of this study on the subject of mercy.

5.2.2. The Holy Spirit 'Reminds' Us

This section will research how the second part of the triple aspect of the path of holiness – the Holy Spirit 'will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you' (DV 4, 7; John 14:26) – is submitted by John Paul II and what is the relation to holiness as union with Christ.

The words 'bring to remembrance' can also be expressed as *to recall*, *to remind*. Christians live their lives in fast-changing circumstances, threats and face an ever-increasing number of challenges which the Pope carefully analyses (DV 38, 55),

³⁹² Francis, 'Gaudete et Exsultate', 147.

³⁹³ Francis, para. 150.

³⁹⁴ Pope Francis emphasises this aspect and advises: 'think of your own history when you pray, and there you will find much mercy. This will also increase your awareness that the Lord is ever mindful of you; he never forgets you. So it makes sense to ask him to shed light on the smallest details of your life, for he sees them all'. Francis, para. 153.

³⁹⁵ Francis, paras. 147–157.

developing his thoughts on the subject with reference to the teaching of St Paul, who expresses ‘man’s inner conflict: “for the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh” (Gal 5:17)’ and is ‘concerned with the morally good or bad works, or better the permanent dispositions – virtues and vices’ (DV 55). Spiritual struggle is unavoidable for any Christian. Due to this ‘inner conflict’, Christians can fall into despair, lose faith and courage, and veer away from a correct orientation to Christ and his love.

The Pope’s reflections on the conciliar appeal to make a *more human world* (DV 59, cf. GS 34) shed light on the Christian’s task to accept God’s invitation to love. Here again is an emphasis on both the personal and the ecclesial character of the path of holiness which leads to union with Christ in the church.

To oppose the threats and to continue to mature in holiness and in the process of unification with Christ, Christians must become attached to Christ and his love, and to do this they must take care of the conscience. Here, the Holy Spirit acts as guide (DV 6, 27), helping to form Christians spiritually, especially through the conscience, reminding them of Christ’s words, teachings, love, and particularly of the hope of ‘eternal life’ (DV 41).

The Pope’s teaching on the conscience is in line with the conciliar teaching in *Gaudium et Spes*, which says of the conscience: ‘[it is] the most secret core and sanctuary of a man, where he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths’ (GS 16; cf. GS 43). Working with one’s conscience is therefore an integral part of daily life, and one which enables the Christian to hear ‘the voice of God’ (GS 16; cf. DV 48), and to be disposed to being – or in the Pope’s words ‘made capable’ of being (DV 9) – conformed to Christ. Such spiritual work is linked to a favourite theme of the Pope, that of conversion: ‘Those who are converted, therefore, are led by the Holy Spirit’ (DV 48). The Pope speaks of initial conversion in the context of baptism,³⁹⁶ and of continual conversion, expressed as *metanoia*, (DV 45), which he also described in *Redemptor Hominis* (RH 20; see section 4.2.1. of this study). He clarifies the relationship between conscience, conversion and love, and states that ‘conversion requires convincing of sin; it includes the interior judgment of the conscience, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in man’s inmost being, becomes at the same time a new beginning of the bestowal of grace and love’ (DV 31).

³⁹⁶ In the context of baptism, the Pope explains that ‘through grace, man is called and made “capable” of sharing in the inscrutable life of God’ (DV 9).

Pope Francis speaks of conversion and holiness in the context of everyday life: ‘At times, life presents great challenges. Through them, the Lord calls us anew to a conversion that can make his grace more evident in our lives, “in order that we may share his holiness” (Heb 12:10). At other times, we need only find a more perfect way of doing what we are already doing’.³⁹⁷

This reflection on the conscience and on conversion shows that these are essential features of the path to uniting with Christ and growing in holiness through the Holy Spirit.

5.2.3. Bearing Witness

Reflecting on the Holy Spirit and His mission, a fundamental aspect of which is witness, the Pope demonstrates repeatedly the return to the biblical perspective and reflects the words of Jesus: ‘He will bear witness to me: and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning’ (John 15:26; DV 25). This witness continues with the Apostles and Jesus’ disciples:

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father, as the words of the farewell discourse in the Upper Room bear witness. At the same time, he is the Spirit of the Son: he is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, as the Apostles and particularly Paul of Tarsus will testify (Gal 4:6; Phil 1:19; Rom 8:11). (DV 14)

In his analysis of the witness of the Holy Spirit and his role in the church, the Pope speaks of the Spirit as ‘the Spirit-Counselor’ (DV 26) and underscores the ecclesial character of the Spirit’s work. He also considers the witness of the Holy Spirit in the context of sin (DV 30) and presents the Holy Spirit as the One who witnesses the love in the Triune God and who therefore is himself this love (DV 34).

From the view of union with Christ, the aspect of witness can therefore be considered the highest point of the triple aspect of the path of holiness realised ‘hand in hand’ with the Holy Spirit.

He teaches us, brings to our remembrance what Jesus said, and helps to bring a witness. The Pope presents that ‘man learns this truth from Jesus Christ and puts it into practice in his own life by the power of the Spirit, whom Jesus himself has given to us’ (DV 59).

³⁹⁷ Francis, ‘Gaudete et Exsultate’, 17.

It can be inferred that it is the witness concerning the Triune God which becomes visible in Jesus Christ, ‘the King of Heaven and Earth’, as the hymn sung on the feast of Christ the King would have it,³⁹⁸ glorified on the ecclesial level of communion as Pius XI proclaimed.³⁹⁹ Over the centuries, and still today, also thanks to John Paul II’s canonisation approach, many saints have been seen as witness to Jesus ‘the King of hearts’.⁴⁰⁰ Pope Francis, who focuses more on the practical side of holiness than does John Paul II in this encyclical, underlines the fact that ‘we are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.’⁴⁰¹ Bearing such witness in everyday life comprehends both the ecclesial and the personal character of holiness, which combine to develop union with Christ in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ, ‘the King of hearts’, gives gifts through the Holy Spirit. In the context of sin and its opposite, the Pope reminds the teaching of St Paul on the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22; DV 55). Christians receive gifts⁴⁰² and ‘fruits’ for their spiritual growth but also to become a witness to Christ and his love. Christ’s ‘self-giving’ (DV 40) bore witness to God the Father: ‘Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved those in the world who were his own, and he loved them to the very end’ (John 13:1). Jesus gave himself in love, and through the power of the Holy Spirit leads his disciples to follow Him and ‘make [them] capable’ (DV 9) of their own self-giving and through that of bearing witness to Jesus Christ, ‘the King of hearts’.

Witness therefore relates to the sacrifice of self-giving (DV 10, 11, 40), of which the Master Model is Jesus, for whom it was a sacrifice of love. Here we return to the verse from the Bible with which this study opened: ‘Because of God’s great mercy to us, I appeal to you: offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer’ (Rom 12:1). In the willingness to listen to and learn from the Holy Spirit, to stay with Christ in prayer, and to sacrifice one’s daily life to God, holiness is realised. This is what it means to bear

³⁹⁸ *Kancionál. Společný zpěvník českých a moravských diecézí* (Praha: Katolický týdeník, 2004), 424.

³⁹⁹ Pius XI, *Quas Primas*, 11 December 1925, accessed 5 October 2020, Vatican.va.

⁴⁰⁰ Pius XI, para. 7. See also ‘Roman Catholic Litanies’, n.d., accessed 31 October 2020, <http://www.liturgies.net/Rogation/LitanyCatholic.htm>.

⁴⁰¹ Francis, ‘Gaudete et Exsultate’, 14.

⁴⁰² The Catechism lists the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit as wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. ‘Catechism of the Catholic Church’, 1831.

witness in the Holy Spirit, which down through the centuries beatified and canonised saints have shown the world. A significant feature of this witness has often been joy: ‘the joy which is the fruit of love’ (DV 60). Bearing witness in the Holy Spirit is a *gift and task* for every Christian on the path of holiness. Such an approach is highlighted by the Pope, for example, in the apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, where he speaks of the saints, including the martyrs, who ‘venerated Christ, who was at the origin of their martyrdom and of their holiness.’⁴⁰³ John Paul II himself became a witness of Jesus as a saint,⁴⁰⁴ and his extraordinary witness is emphasised by his biographers.⁴⁰⁵

Finally, as a custom, no consideration on the witness of the Holy Spirit would be complete without reference to the Virgin Mary, and as is his pattern, John Paul II brings a Marian dimension to this subject: ‘Mary entered the history of the salvation of the world through the obedience of faith. And faith, in its deepest essence, is the openness of the human heart to the gift: to God’s self-communication in the Holy Spirit’ (DV 51). In her openness and availability to the Holy Spirit, Mary witnesses to and glorifies God in a most exemplary way, as the Holy Spirit ‘made her heart perfectly obedient to that self-communication of God which surpassed every human idea and faculty’. As well as becoming close to every Christian on the personal level, everything related to Mary also has an ecclesial dimension: ‘the Church perseveres in prayer with Mary. This union of the praying Church with the Mother of Christ has been part of the mystery of the Church from the beginning’ (DV 66).

5.3. Conclusion

This chapter connected the theme of holiness with the two preceding chapters of this study and dealt with both the personal and the ecclesial dimension of union with Christ in the Holy Spirit. After setting the encyclical against a backdrop of the Second Vatican Council, John Paul II develops the encyclical’s pneumatological character with a focus on the mission of the Holy Spirit in the church. The aspect of friendship as an intimate dimension of union with God was also identified. The Pope calls Christians to become witnesses to God in their daily lives. A triple aspect of the path of holiness was identified:

⁴⁰³ John Paul II, “*Tertio Millennio Adveniente. Apostolic Letter on Preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000*,” November 10, 1994, para. 37, Vatican.va.

⁴⁰⁴ Francis, ‘Holy Mass and Rite of Canonization of Blessed John XXIII and John Paul II. Homily of Pope Francis’, 27 April 2014, accessed 5 October 2020, Vatican.va.

⁴⁰⁵ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*; Oder and Gaeta, *Why He Is a Saint*.

the Holy Spirit will teach, will bring to remembrance, and will bear witness. This concept was explored alongside a description of aspects leading to the path of holiness underlined by love: God loves the world and wants everyone to be saved. Cooperation with the Holy Spirit leads the Christian to deeper union with Christ. The Holy Spirit strengthens Christians and gives them the hope that *love is stronger than sin*. The Virgin Mary and the saints are exemplary witnesses to holiness for every Christian.

6. Conclusion

The primary focus of his study on the theology of holiness according to St John Paul II was how he understands and interprets Christian holiness, and the perspective he brings to the subject. The study offered a brief view of the saints he beatified and canonised, followed by insight into the moments of his life and spirituality, exploring, in line with the approach of spiritual theology, his appeal to *understand him from within*. The study's approach continued to reflect the theme of holiness from the position of selected texts of the Second Vatican Council and, taking into account the post-conciliar interpretation of Karol Wojtyła, considered the roots of his theology of holiness. The research into the theology of holiness in John Paul II's magisterium followed within selected encyclicals and explored the aspects and characteristics that he emphasised, and which sources he based his ideas on and kept returning to. The basic thesis and the study's golden thread is an approach to Christian holiness described as union with Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and the realisation of such union in the Church.

In terms of methodology, the study followed the perspective of spiritual theology, treating spiritual life, in all its fullness, as a dimension of the relationship between human beings and God. The methodological aim focused on the elements that relate to the union of the human person with God in Christ and the development of the doctrine from and through Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit, and, in parallel, to the development of the Christian's spiritual life. This approach was a golden thread that ran through the whole research and writing. The study was carried out in gradual, systematic steps, starting with John Paul's life and spirituality and moving on to the analysis and interpretation of a selection of his magisterial texts, which not only represent the Trinitarian character of a relationship with God but also lead along the path of holiness to Christian mission.

The first chapter introduced a reflection on the people the Pope beatified and canonised, contributing to their memory in the liturgy and thus commemorating their testimony and their life journeys with God; some of these canonisations were considered by some as being controversial. Walsh suggested that the extraordinary number of canonisations and the people chosen for that honour were each a function of the Pope's extensive travels around the world. This can certainly be argued, but we could equally suggest that through his approach the Pope was manifesting his sense of belonging to and with the people, his closeness to them; that by making saints of their neighbours, he was

highlighting the humanity of the whole human race; and that through the ‘canonised path’ he was demonstrating the ‘uncanonised’ path of holiness for everyone. Holiness therefore brings the saint’s humanity closer to the people: John Paul’s approach to canonisation emphasises humanity and the transformation of daily life according to Christ’s example.

A brief exploration of John Paul II’s own canonisation was then presented to answer the question: Why was he canonised? His continual adherence to Christ was viewed through his discovery of his vocation to the priesthood, and the inspiration he found in the saints and the everyday application of their virtues in his own life. The essential Marian dimension strongly contributed to the formation of his spirituality and his life’s journey with God. He was a man of constant prayer. Other significant aspects of his personality and life were highlighted: his life of personal poverty; the importance he placed on forgiveness, even for those who attack or persecute us; and his bearing of illness throughout his life and at the end of it, which provided a strong testimony of Christ to the world. His personal holiness came from the life he lived. This is a new view of holiness: holiness as humanity that bears the authentic witness of holiness. This Pope showed that the ordinary humanity of every person becomes extraordinary in a life lived as a follower of Christ, as his disciple in the Church.

Reflecting on the conciliar approach to the *aggiornamento* enabled us to clarify the need for both *adaptation* and *renewal* of the Christian life. The Council returned to biblical holiness and expressed it by describing its Christological nature, which is especially presented in chapter V of *Lumen Gentium* on the universal call to holiness, which is *communicable* to Jesus’ followers. Butler brings a novel approach to holiness in his discussion of the *aggiornamento* in the conciliar decree *Perfectae Caritatis*. Butler interprets the phrase *accommodated renewal* as meaning both an adaptation to today’s conditions and *the recovery of the initial inspiration* found in the Bible. This approach could also be applied to the interpretation of holiness in *Gaudium et Spes*.

Exploration of the roots of Wojtyła’s conception of holiness brought findings from, but not limited to, the period after the 1950s, when Wojtyła built and developed his concept of holiness through his pastoral activities among the lay faithful and his intellectual efforts on behalf of students and married couples. Further, it was reflected that his post-conciliar study *Sources of Renewal* emphasised the ecclesial character of the realisation of holiness in the communion (*communio*) of the People of God. Here, Christians realise holiness and fullness in their own lives by *making a perfect gift of themselves* to others and thereby journey along the path towards their eschatological

destiny. When discussing the conciliar call to holiness, Wojtyła used the words *perfection* and *holiness* as synonyms and addressed holiness/perfection on two levels: first, it related to moral perfection, fed by love; secondly, it concerned the relationship between holiness and the dignity of the individual. Finally, it is worth noting that Wojtyła emphasised the importance of the holiness of the Virgin Mary to a greater degree than does the Council.

The message of *Gaudium et Spes* para. 22 was explored to answer the question *What is man?* (GS 10). We can say that the Christian vocation is to become conformed to Christ in the Holy Spirit, and that the pathway to God the Father is Christ. The Council offered a Christological conception of holiness that is also anthropological: following Christ is a process of humanisation which takes place in a believing Church that is in the world and that serves the world, and which is focused on contemporary issues.

Wojtyła's commentary in his post-conciliar treatise *Sources of Renewal* speaks of the *aggiornamento* (*renovatio accommodata*) as a manifestation of the *historical consciousness* of the Church. He showed that the conciliar presentation of the core of Christian reality is linked to the mystery of redemption through Christ. According to this Christological character of holiness, all of a person's being and doing, both the inner life and the outer expression, is orientated towards Christ. The vocation of attaining self-knowledge in Christ is both *a gift* and *a task*: knowledge is not a one-time matter, but a long-term transformational process achieved by the grace of God. In emphasising the fact that people gain full knowledge of themselves only in the light of Christ, the Council and Wojtyła alike gave holiness a strong anthropological and Christological character.

All this raised further questions for reflection on the topic: Does the holiness presented by the Council take a different form today? How can we bring holiness closer to the contemporary human experience? Such also were the questions that concerned Pope John Paul II.

John Paul's immersion in God brought to the encyclicals a share of his spiritual life and deep trust in God's providence. He processed the encyclicals *in meditation* and as a *form of meditation*, to which he invites all who read them. In his interpretation, a meditation on the content of the encyclicals is a meditation guided by faith, love and hope. Meditation is therefore a path by which a Christian deepens their union with Christ and fosters holiness. In John Paul II's encyclicals, we see meditation and holiness as mutual phenomena that are related and that intertwine in union with Christ.

Using both biblical and conciliar sources, the reflection on the Christological character of holiness focused on Jesus Christ as the 'perfect man'. It showed that John Paul II's

Christological conception of holiness is also anthropological. The word 'union' was explored from the perspective of spiritual theology and in the context of other subjects such as joy, prayer, love and friendship, and the transformative dimension of union with Christ. Reference to this union was explored in several of John Paul II's encyclicals, in which he cultivated the concept of communion with God as union with Christ in the Church through the Holy Spirit, emphasising, therefore, both the ecclesial and the pneumatological character of holiness. Regarding the ecclesial dimension, the Pope underlined the fundamental aspect of holiness wherein the Christian realises their journey of holiness in union with Christ as a member of a 'community of disciples' (RH 21). In relation to the sacrament of penance, the Eucharist was considered the most profound encounter with Christ; it is linked to the Pope's appeal for continual conversion to Christ, which is a matter both of God's grace and of human co-operation.

The reflection on mercy and the forgiving love of the Father God brought the insight that the Christian's relationship with Christ is with the One who is the Way to Father, who is invisible but gives grace to know him through Christ. John Paul II thereby laid the spiritual foundations of paternity and did this in the context of his exploration of the spirituality of Faustyna Kowalska. He also developed the conciliar teaching on the Trinitarian dimension of the Christian life. He constantly drew attention to the need to meditate, not only in certain situations, moments, or times designated for meditation, but throughout the day. The Pope developed the idea of union where mercy is manifested 'in Christ and through Christ' (DM 2), but also highlighted the 'gratuitous' character of holiness. Mercy as a 'gratuitous' gift leads to the development of union with Christ and therefore of holiness. Meditating on Christ and the fulness of his suffering opens the doors of God's mercy and the Trinitarian dimension of the Christian life. The Church and all Christians witness to holiness in Christ. Christ 'transforms' (DM 14) the Christian and the Church invisibly on the inner, spiritual level, leading to the testimony of peace, love, mercy, and compassion for a suffering world with the courage to stand up for justice, as such testimony makes known to the world the face of Christ and of the Father.

The reflection on holiness also raised the question of how John Paul II understood the nature of the kingdom of God and how it is linked to holiness rooted in union with Christ. In the Old Testament, the term kingdom of Heaven is linked with the idea of salvation; in the New Testament, many of Jesus' parables highlight the distinction between the kingdom of God 'already present' and the kingdom that is 'yet to come'. In *Redemptoris missio*, the kingdom of God is described as 'a person with the face and name of Jesus of

Nazareth, the image of the invisible God' (RMI18, cf. GS 22). With this comes an emphasis on the kingdom in today's world, but also an echo of the conciliar *aggiornamento*. John Paul explored the relationship between union with Christ and the Christian's participation in spreading the kingdom of God in the context of God's love and mercy, to which the Christian gains access through faith and conversion.

One essential aspect of the kingdom of God regarding the context of holiness is liberation from sin and evil. John Paul developed the idea that liberation comes through participation in spreading the kingdom of God – through union with Christ. Liberation is the solution, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to facing a variety of threats and fears. It is the way to open oneself to the love of God and at the same time to participate in creating a more humane world. This aspect of liberation was found as highly relevant to today's world.

A life lived in union with Christ and in relationship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit is intimately associated with John Paul II's urgent appeal for a new evangelisation, especially in the 'declining culture' of Europe, as he reflected on in the exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*. He addressed the existential fragmentation of the human person and calls on Christians to renew their faith, to be converted, daily, in both personal and ecclesial dimensions. For John Paul II, the relationship between evangelisation and holiness is linked to the need to bring new testimonies of living a life centred on Christ. Pope Francis affirms this, but also speaks of the joy of proclaiming the Gospel to others.

The final chapter explored the pneumatological character of holiness, especially as found in the encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, and connected the notion of holiness with the previous chapters with regard to addressing the Trinitarian character of holiness. The introduction to the encyclical proposed a background mostly in the Second Vatican Council and the Gospel of John together with a focus on significant aspects related to union with Christ. The pneumatological character was identified alongside a strong ecclesial character, which the Pope emphasised through a discussion regarding the mission of the Holy Spirit. One of the essential aspects identified was the need for personal conversion. The Pope emphasised the role of the Holy Spirit and highlighted an aspect of union with Christ that can be seen in the lives of the saints, and that is the aspect of friendship, an intimate dimension of the unity *of* God and union *with* God. The Pope urgently appealed to Christians to become witnesses to God in their daily lives. He also repeatedly emphasised the triple aspect of the path of holiness as seen in Jesus' words '[The Holy Spirit] will teach ... will bring to your remembrance ... will bear witness'

(John 14:26). This concept was identified as being grounded in the concept of love: God loves the whole world and wants everyone to be saved (Jn. 3:16-17). When the Christian co-operates with the Holy Spirit in the Spirit's mission, the Spirit will lead the Christian into deeper union with Christ. The Pope repeatedly emphasises the Spirit's strengthening of the Christian and builds on the hope of 'love stronger than sin'. The Virgin Mary represents an exemplary witness, followed by the saints, as a way to holiness for every Christian.

This study has provided a specific view of holiness as gleaned from the life and works of Pope John Paul II. The Pope highlighted that to follow Christ is to follow Him as a member of 'the community of the disciples.' A person becomes fully human only in Christ and by following Him in unity with the Christian community.

Reflecting on the theology of holiness according to St John Paul II was a great challenge. It helped me to realise more deeply that the Christian life is a life in union with Christ, which means the beauty and richness of life with the Holy Trinity. It proved to be a source of spiritual and academic enrichment, for which I am grateful to God and the intercession of the Virgin Mary, St John Paul II, and St Judas Thaddeus.

List of Abbreviations

The encyclicals of John Paul II mentioned in the text

DM	<i>Dives in Misericordia</i> (30 November 1980)
DV	<i>Dominum et Vivificantem</i> (18 May 1986)
EV	<i>Evangelium Vitae</i> (25 March 1995)
RH	<i>Redemptor Hominis</i> (4 March 1979)
RMat	<i>Redemptoris Mater</i> (25 March 1987)
RMis	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i> (7 December 1990)
SA	<i>Slavorum Apostoli</i> (2 June 1985)
SRS	<i>Sollicitudo Rei Socialis</i> (30 December 1987)
UUS	<i>Ut Unum Sint</i> (25 May 1995)
VS	<i>Veritatis Splendor</i> (6 August 1993)

The official text of the encyclicals in Latin and English translation is taken from the Vatican website at <http://www.vatican.va>.

Other writings of John Paul II mentioned in the text

DPM	<i>Divinus Perfectionis Magister</i>
RP	<i>Reconciliatio et Paenitentia</i>

The official text of the documents in Latin and English translation is taken from the Vatican website at <http://www.vatican.va>.

Documents of the Second Vatican Council mentioned in the text

DVB	<i>Dei Verbum</i>
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
AA	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i>

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