

Pázmány Péter Catholic University

Faculty of Theology

The Church as a model of fraternity in Pope Francis' teachings

Dissertatio ad Doctoratum

Thesis-booklet

Written by Kallós Péter Pál

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Kránitz Mihály

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I. Summary of the research task

Writing about a sitting pope is an interesting challenge. On the one hand, he is constantly in the spotlight, and new statements from him or about him may appear every day, on the other hand, he is regularly criticized. Pope Francis has been leading the Church of Christ for nine years, and both in his writings and in his verbal expressions, the topics that are close to his heart can be felt. It speaks even more than its predecessors about the importance of helping the poor, the missionary nature of the Church, mercy, and the protection of the created world. He is particularly committed to these, and not only based on simple goodwill but as a result of their theological significance; especially considering human dignity, which originates from God and is unquestionable. All people have enormous dignity, so they have a right from God to live a proper life, and since this is mostly undermined, it is the task of the Church to make it felt and show fraternal solidarity.

At the same time, since the Holy Spirit leads the Church, everyone receives sufficient grace to fulfill their vocation, especially the Pope. It could be sure that the Holy Spirit is invisible, mysteriously, but always there with the head of the church. Our research focuses on how the topics that the Pope considers to be matters of the heart and often voices are related to the concept and experience of "fraternity". Since everything is connected with everything else, all the aspects that belong to the Church's mission could be condensed into the concept of "brotherhood", because the togetherness of humanity affects all the events and actions of the world. If people really see each other as brothers, injustices and bad differences will begin to disappear, and everyone will have the opportunity to lead a dignified human life.

II. Research method, sources, and their use

The working method of our thesis is to place Pope Francis' frequently used expressions, emphases, and teachings (e.g. the Church is merciful, lives for the poor, outgoing, resembles a field hospital, missionary, mother, ecumenical, protects nature, etc...) into larger theological contexts, especially II. into the spirit of the Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the statements of the Magisterium. We would like to point out that the current head of the church continues in the same direction, even more strongly than his predecessors. As a primary source, we use the writings of Pope Francis, which were published by the Vatican and Catholic publishers, primarily his encyclicals and apostolic exhortations. Of course, we also use the Bible, the pronouncements of the Magisterium, and the Catholic Catechism as important sources; the

papal formulations are mostly aligned with these. Our secondary sources will be other fundamental theological works (mainly those after the last council), as well as some commentaries that the Church XXI. are related to its role in the 19th century. We present the similarity of the above-mentioned main emphases of Pope Francis - expanded with a few smaller ones - to the deposit of faith; the background of all of them will be examined in the light of the Revelation and previous Magisterium statements. The pope mostly encourages and calls for action, the practice of which belongs to pastoral theology. We are writing about a fundamental topic, so we are scrutinizing the religious foundations of papal appeals, which can also be found in abundance in the writings of the head of the church. In the end, we conclude: Pope Francis' emphases and kind matters of the heart do not overshadow the rest at all they put the entire belief system in a more authentic light. Because if the Church is authentic in its actions and its good efforts to make the world better are visible, it is attractive, and this is precisely the goal.

In addition, Pope Francis receives a lot of criticism. Mostly because of the mentioned topics, against the deposit of faith. Another goal of our thesis is to examine whether all the statements of Pope Francis are in complete unity with the entire Catholic faith. He came to the throne of St. Peter from special circumstances, he knows South American poverty well, and therefore he speaks out on numerous occasions to eliminate injustices precisely in the interest of authentic evangelization. The Church can fulfill its mission if it represents human dignity and equality; this is the starting point for the further transfer of faith, which nowadays can only be achieved by attraction, not by words of authority.

Our thesis contains five large chapters in Romans, which examines the teaching of Pope Francis based on the following aspects: I. the good and bad side of human nature, II. the relationship of the Church as a mother to its members and all people, III. the ideal relationship between people, IV. how the Church wants to achieve unity with all other religions, V. the importance, and possibilities of nature conservation. All five chapters evaluate the papal teaching from the point of view of fraternity and responsibility.

III. Theses of the thesis

1. Our most important thesis, on which the thesis is based, is that *fraternal belonging and its practical experience can make the world better, and the Church is most capable of this*. Although fraternal unity has been voiced by certain individuals and groups in every age, only the Church has how this can be achieved because man does not act purely on

his own strength, but the basis of all his actions is the talent that comes from God, and grace is also necessary to stay in the good. The various political fraternity buildings did not achieve their goal, because they did not take into account the supernatural vocation of man and thought on an earthly plane, thus selfishness always reared its head in them and caused immeasurable suffering under the guise of fraternity. If politics had been able to create true brotherhood, we would now live in a much better world. The Church can look at man in the light of his full, God-given role and dignity, and is, therefore, able to provide the right aspects for building a cohesive future.

2. At the beginning of our thesis, we look at human nature from the point of view of the dangers that are the consequences of original sin. The practical consequence of this was selfishness, which can exert a bad influence on all ages and in all human events. Pope Francis sees the wealth of a few and the immeasurable poverty of many, and this injustice cries out for equalization. The Pope very firmly defends the *dignity of all people, which is not a mere social category, but a process of creation*. It uses "casting off" as a negative term, especially when society sees certain individuals or groups as cast-offs, which is the opposite of fraternity. It is precisely the mission of the Church to live out practical love, the necessary starting point for this is to overcome selfishness. The head of the church warns: although technology is very advanced, the immeasurable consumption of less well-off people is against the true dignity of man. Against yourself, as well as against others, because the satisfaction of excessive lust for life is only possible at the expense of others. Consumerism empties a person, it does not give true happiness.
 3. *Two new concepts of Pope Francis: unique sanctity of life and missionary discipleship*. He talks about the sanctity of life because, although the concept seems too lofty if the term is understood well, it is everyone's vocation and duty. The faithful experience of everyday life in the mirror of Christ; and it can be done by every person. This will help to break away from all messy attachments, especially bad consumer pleasures, and open up to brotherhood. Missionary discipleship helps to get there; it is a balance between activity and passivity: it is necessary for everyone to draw from God's riches of grace and to continually grow spiritually, and this encourages evangelization. The two concepts express the Christian life program in almost the same way: striving for the sanctity of life draws from Christian sources and radiates good to others; in the same way, missionary discipleship, filled with Christ, passes on the truth it has learned.
- II. The Vatican Council once again drew attention to the general priesthood of the laity,

but in few places, this was sufficiently and actively brought to the attention of the faithful. This is complemented very well by the concept of missionary discipleship. Since lay people are in the overwhelming majority, they have an extraordinary role in the success of evangelization anyway, because they can reach more people. Its essence is its mission, and that applies to all its members.

4. Today, the so-called gender theory is a trending concept in many countries (in fact, in some places, opponents can be punished), which is actually in stark contrast to God's plan. The Pope also stands for God's eternal plan, for normality: *human is male and female, which cannot be changed arbitrarily because it is a gift from above*. It protects the family and those family roles, which is God's intention. This is not exactly contrary to freedom, but rather the correct living of freedom and self-realization in the good sense.
5. We also look at the Church as Mother based on the Pope's principles. The Church as Mother, as the Body of Christ, and as a people; these three concepts overlap to a large extent because they express the close attachment of the members to each other and the principal. Most of all, Pope Francis emphasizes: *the manifestation of Our Lady is mercy, and the daring to act with courage* for both existing and future children. However, we would like to disprove two important misunderstandings: one is that *mercy is not in opposition to, but in close harmony with, justice*, even if this seems impossible at first glance. In a human sense, the two seem to exclude each other, but in the order of grace, this must be viewed on a different level. The other (mainly today's) misunderstanding is that mercy "just so" applies to the subject right as if the person does not have to participate in it. It is perhaps the most serious mistake in the world because, *without conversion, mercy cannot be realized*. However, the Pope places the greatest emphasis on the fact that, in imitation of God, the means of mercy must be used in the mission as well. You have to allow God to act so that His grace reaches its destination. However, this does not exclude practical justice, responsibility, or punishment, because it is required by the order of mercy and the common good.
6. The Pope calls elitism the behavior that resembles the thinking of the Pharisees. There are Catholic individuals and groups, clerics and lay people, who are content with their closed world and lost in it, in false spiritual security. Anyone who wants to avoid evangelization out of pride, convenience, and selfishness is sinning omission, because the very essence of the Church, the mission, is not being realized. Pope Francis is perfectly aware of this and encourages it when he talks about "*exit*" and "*camp hospital*"

church images: this is a new formulation of the missionary mission. The real *proselytism is actually attraction*; this is exactly what follows from experiencing brotherhood because the individual can change his convictions in the right direction when he has experienced authentic good.

7. In the Church, due to belonging and interdependence, the perspectives of people's mutual relationships and responsibilities must be taken into account. The community of the Church has a visible but also an invisible side; the latter should not be neglected either, because the saints strengthen us. However, with Pope Francis, the emphasis is more on the visible, earthly, so-called pilgrim Church, because it is still moving, acting, and active, and the future depends on it. Conflict avoidance is among the state diplomatic actions of the past decades, and this often passes into ordinary thinking or human comfort. Why meddle in other people's business? At first glance, this question may seem moral, but it is not: some conflicts cannot and should not be avoided. It can be said: the biggest conflict in the entire world is the preaching of the Gospel, that is, the very essence of the Church. God's original plan is for the gospel to transform the lives of humanity, however, every change provokes contradictions. The proclamation of the faith necessarily provokes resistance, because it invites people to fight with themselves, which is what the Pope does, which is why he writes and teaches.
8. Pope Francis is intimately familiar with liberation theology, and he embraces what is good in it. He fights against worldwide poverty. But he rejects armed struggle, and also as if liberation on earth were Salvation because the fulfillment of the latter is only possible eschatologically. It precisely emphasizes the *Church's service of love because it is the only solution to the injustice that does not obscure man's original destiny and heavenly future*. So it shows an excellent balance: the poor must be helped and "liberated", not through violent struggles, but from within, due to respect for the other, by eliminating injustices. This includes the proper reception of migrants because they can also be considered poor. However, even though this has its limits; every country must deal with this issue openly but responsibly.
9. The head of the church wants to make the faithful feel the role and responsibility for the Church. That is why it is an innovation for Pope Francis to *extend synodality to all people*. This does not mean a reduction in the importance of official councils, but rather directs attention to the all-pervading role of the Holy Spirit; anyone can give good ideas and useful suggestions. Throughout the history of the entire church, there were people of every age whose activities had a significant influence on the future, and on the history

of salvation, even if not all of them were canonized. Although the Teaching Office plays an indispensable role, and its importance cannot be diminished in any way, ideas and opinions can be requested. It's so interesting because it's ongoing right now, and it gives a very strong sense of brotherhood.

10. In our thesis, we observe that Pope Francis *is looking for a good relationship with separated Christians and all other religions, but this does not in any way mean that the importance of the Church is diminished it highlights it.* The II. It became one of the most serious misunderstandings of the spirit of the Vatican Council among the faithful as if it didn't matter who belonged to which religion. The weight of the Church has not decreased in the least, because this would be impossible due to its close unity with Christ. It does not mean equality when Pope Francis builds ecumenical relations or meets with other religions. Although for pedagogical reasons and the sake of the salvation of souls, the head of the church does not constantly mention the unity and indispensability of the Church, however, all his actions and manifestations are missional, the goal of which is complete unity, that is, giving others a share in all the spiritual good that can be found in the Church. Brotherhood manifests itself precisely when someone wants to share learned, true values with others.
11. In this regard, the head of the church continues the direction of the synod, which often emphasizes *the importance of dialogue; this is the real tool for getting to know and appreciating the other, and for the mutual transfer of knowledge.* However, to avoid misunderstandings, it is necessary to prove: *the dialogue is not some kind of bargaining, but listening to the other party with an open heart and explaining the entire Catholic faith in a way that is understandable to him (tactfully and gradually).* No one in the world has the right to let go of the content of faith, it is obligatory to preserve it in its entirety. The correct dialogue conveys the importance of the other person and allows transferring faith. Furthermore, the Church can grow, because more or less value can be found everywhere; it all originates from God, and the good in the other can become receptive through dialogue.
12. At the end of our thesis, we look at the protection of the created world based on the head of the church's thoughts. We all live on the planet, so the requirement and manifestation of brotherhood are to protect it. Pope Francis' new point of view is that he does not look at natural problems alone, such as pollution, or the extinction of species, but also the problems in human societies, because *the life of humanity and the world around us are inseparable.* The problems that already exist call for a solution as

soon as possible, because scientists also see the many harmful consequences, they will get worse, but those responsible do not take many actions, because they have a counter-interest. Environmental protection has been a topic in politics and economics for decades because it affects the entire planet. Human factors affect everything, such as worldwide poverty and the lives of disadvantaged workers also stem from environmental damage, and possible deterioration or stagnation puts more and more ethnic groups in a difficult situation. *Ecotheology* assesses that *all created things have value*, because God only created good, and therefore all should be given sufficient attention. But still, the man comes first. Pope Francis' appeal here is more pastoral, but the basis of everything is the plan that God has decided for even the smallest living being.

Overall, it can be said: Pope Francis' highlighted topics are very current, urgent and missionary in nature. This is precisely what best proves the indispensable need of the Catholic Church, which must be reflected in fraternal behavior.

IV. Publications from the topic of the work

5 longer studies in Hungarian:

Ferenc pápa szinodális útja (PPKE-HTK library website:

https://htk.ppke.hu/uploads/File/disszertaciok/tanulmany.1h.Ferenc_papa_szinodalis_utja.pdf
)

A szinkretizmus veszélye (PPKE-HTK library website:

https://htk.ppke.hu/uploads/File/disszertaciok/tanulmany.2h.A_szinkretizmus_veszelye.pdf)

A párbeszéd jelentősége az Egyház életében (PPKE-HTK library internet interface:

https://htk.ppke.hu/uploads/File/disszertaciok/tanulmany.3h.A_parbeszed_jelentosege_az_Egyhaz_eleteben.pdf)

Az Egyház szerepe a mai európai társadalomban (PPKE-HTK library internet interface:

https://htk.ppke.hu/uploads/File/disszertaciok/tanulmany.4h.Az_Egyhaz_szerepe_a_mai_europai_tarsadalomban.pdf)

Tanítói hivatali döntés az érdemszerzés végének időpontjáról (Teológiai Hittudományi journal LV. / 2021. 3-4., 139-144.)

4 shorter studies in Hungarian:

Az *Amoris Laetitia* legvitatottabb témája (PPKE-HTK library internet interface:

https://htk.ppke.hu/uploads/File/disszertaciok/tanulmany.5r.Az_Amoris_Laetitia_legvitatottabb_temaja.pdf)

Ferenc pápa ökológiai megtérésre hív (PPKE-HTK library internet interface:

https://htk.ppke.hu/uploads/File/disszertaciok/tanulmany.6r.Ferenc_papa_okologiai_megtereresre_hiv.pdf)

A fejlett országok és a fogyasztói társadalom (PPKE-HTK library internet interface:

https://htk.ppke.hu/uploads/File/disszertaciok/tanulmany.7r.A_fejlett_orzagok_es_a_fogyasztoi_tarsadalom.pdf)

Reformáció – Katolikus szemmel (Ercsi Híradó XXVIII. Volume No. 5, June 11, 2017)

1 short study in English:

The individual's afterlife fate from the point of view of religious pedagogy (DOSZ website: https://www.dosz.hu/_doc/to_dok/108/1616489001.pdf, 55-56.)