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## JOHN PAUL II'S CHRISTOLOGICAL-TRINITARIAN ANTHROPOLOGY: ITS IMPACT ON EVANGELIZATION IN KENYA

**Abstract.** This article seeks to address John Paul II's approach to Christian anthropology through the lens of his select encyclicals, notably *Redemptor Hominis*, *Dives in Misericordiae*, *Dominum Vivificantem* and orations to the Bishops of Kenya in his first visit to the same in 1980. John Paul II's Christological-Trinitarian understanding of human dignity has immense implications for a person-centred approach to a wide range of issues both ecclesial and civil. John Paul II's approach to anthropology offers new perspectives on Christian anthropology itself and evangelization. These new perspectives can further lead to advances on Christian anthropology and evangelization. Working predominantly with biblical data and expanding upon human persons as created in the image of God (*imago Dei*), John Paul clarifies that the incarnation of the Son of God has granted human life the aspect that he intended man to have in the original state before the fall. He built on the *imago Dei* in order to better advance the conversation of human dignity, freedom and responsibility in line with his distinctive theological ploy thereof enlightened by his philosophical outlook. This article tracks the consequences of John Paul II's Christological-Trinitarian approach to human person on the reality of the Christian faith globally and particularly in Africa; the Church's ongoing effort to receive the Word more effectively and the concept of new evangelization as a key legacy of the pontificate of Pope Saint John Paul II.

**Keywords:** Trinitarian approach; anthropology; evangelization; Kenya

### INTRODUCTION

John Paul II wrote his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, in 1979, highlighting that through the incarnation God the Father has, as it were, enhanced human dignity. In 1980, the Pope wrote the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* emphasizing that God the "Father of mercies" has enabled us to grasp his closeness to man in his Son made man, the incarnate Mercy. In the face of

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great difficulties like the terrible challenge of COVID-19 pandemic, widespread distrust not only in God's benevolence but also in man, and idolization of humanity – they all stand in blatant divergence with the merciful love of God as manifested in the gift of the Incarnation. Thanks to the divine impulse of the Spirit of the Father and the Son, sinful humanity can turn to the love of the Father in the Spirit through the Son Incarnate. John Paul II's 1986 encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem* is a wide-ranging one on the vital intimate union between God and man made possible by the gift of the Spirit. Man's life in God is a fruit of God's saving communication in the Spirit. The Church in fidelity to her founder, Christ, professes her faith in the Holy Spirit as the giver of life. The inner doxological intent of the Christian faith is attained, even if not in totality here on earth, when God's gifts of creation, incarnation, paschal mystery and Pentecost alongside other divine benefits are acknowledged and accepted. Evil must not be the last word. The Church as the body of Christ is at the service of God and humanity. Christology is the divine appeal to man, as it were, that his nature can be taken up and personalized in a way freed from the ontological necessity of his corporeal identity. Mere corporeal identity paves way to tragic individualism, egocentricism and selfishness. Ecclesiologically, man sheds off his sinful self by accepting Christ within the matrix of preaching of the good news of salvation, faith in Christ, repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.

#### JOHN PAUL II'S CHRISTOLOGICAL-TRINITARIAN APPROACH TO ANTHROPOLOGY

John Paul II's "Trinitarian encyclicals" – *Redemptor Hominis*, *Dives Misericordia*, and *Dominum et Vivificantem* – show his Christian approach to anthropology and how this impact on his theology of the body. Man is created in the image of God by reason of his spiritual makeup.<sup>1</sup> The above-mentioned encyclicals can aid to give us a basic grasp of John Paul II's Christological foundation of anthropology and Trinitarian theology, as well as his rootedness in the teachings of Vatican Council II.

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<sup>1</sup> De Lubac's thoughts on "supernature" as captured in his book, *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (New York: Herder, 1967), restored the teaching of Aquinas, who according to him, continued the patristic tradition concerning the human spirit as image of God and never entertained the hypothetical construct "pure human nature" of some later Scholastics.



Christian teachings are undeniably intelligible through their mutual connection to one another (*nexus mysteriorum*) and in their overarching edifice, that is, man's ultimate end (cf. *DS* 3016). Consequently, the Catholic principle of hierarchy of truths deserves a focus in this regard. *Unitatis Redintegratio* teaches that: "There exists an order or 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of Christian faith" (*UR*, no. 11). All revealed truths are to be accepted with the same divine faith. However, their weight and significance vary depending on their relation to the mystery of Christ.

In the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul II clarifies that through the incarnation God granted human life the aspect that he intended man to have from his first beginning; indeed he has given that facet definitively. He has done this in keeping with his merciful love which justifies (cf. *RH*, no. 1). In *Dominum et Vivificantem*, he writes: "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*, no. 59). Man's dignity resides in his being created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26–27). Man lost his original dignity in the fall, but God did not abandon him in that predicament. Man's dignity also resides in the truth that he is the subject of God's condescension in his Son made flesh which contains the origin of definitive glorification.

The plan of salvation is hinged on the merciful love of God since the paschal Christ is the final incarnation of mercy. *Dives in Miericordia* puts much emphasis on God the Father who is rich in mercy. The gospel words: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7) constitute according to John Paul II, a kind of summary of the entire gospel message, of the whole of the "wonderful exchange" (*admirabile commercium*) enclosed therein (cf. *DM* 8). In Christ and through him, the invisible God becomes particularly visible in his mercy. There is a "divine limit" sanctioned on evil and suffering, overtly that limit is mercy (cf. *DM*, no. 2). In Jesus Christ, every path toward man, has been allotted to the Church irrevocably. The Church's mission is theological and anthropocentric (cf. *DM*, no. 1).

#### THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL FOCUS OF JOHN PAUL II'S THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

God the creator is the author of human dignity. This dignity was disfigured by man in the fall but restored and improved by the redemptive Incarnation



and Paschal event of the Son of God made man. Christ identified himself with every person in a certain way. John Paul II judiciously dedicated the initial key instruction of his pontificate to issues of person as a gift; human dignity and freedom. He gave one hundred and twenty nine talks between September 1979 and November 1984 to develop a theology of the body, an icon of the relational identity of the human person.<sup>2</sup> Human identity with its corporeality proclaims God's mystery.

The Judeo-Christian Scriptures and particularly the gospels confirm human dignity and human rights. The question of human dignity coupled with rights and duties became central in John Paul II's ministry. Marxism with its material view of all realities put the person at the centre. Thus to tackle this naturalism a shift to anthropology proved decisive to Karol Wojtyla in his studies even before his election to become pope John Paul II in 1978. His main interests focused not on science but humanities, literature, theatre and poetry. As a theologian, philosopher and above all, pastor, John Paul II made as his central pastoral programme the consummate importance of human dignity, person and rights.

His anthropology defines the person in relation to God. This is a thread which runs throughout Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*' anthropology. Certainly some of the signs of the times or main social and cultural movements in contemporary times include the discovery of historicity; movements of freedom, equality and brotherhood; feminist movements and the ecological movements; these have called for the patient dialogue between theology with the current cultural movements in question.<sup>3</sup> The Church rejects nothing of what is true and not repugnant to justice and morality in those movements (cf. *NA 2*). Truth is another dimension of human dignity. God is the infinite veracity. In the quest for moral truth persons can transcend themselves towards God. Accordingly, John Paul II has elucidated:

The more the Church's mission is centred upon man- the more it is, so to speak, anthropocentric-the more it must be confirmed and actualized theocentrically, that is to say, be directed in Jesus Christ to the Father. While the various currents of

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997), 1-423=603. The one hundred and twenty nine talks delivered by John Paul II from 1979-1984 are contained in pages 25-423. Appendices range from pages 427-603 containing encyclical of Paul VI, *Of Human Life (Humanae Vitae)*, 1968; Apostolic Letter of John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*, 1988; encyclical of John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, 1995 and lastly index.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. International Theological Commission, *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*, no. 55 (Rome, 2012).



human thought both in the past and at the present have tended and still tend to separate theocentrism and anthropocentrism, and even to set them in opposition to each other, the Church, following Christ, seeks to link them in human history in a deep and organic way. And this is also one of the important one, of the teaching of the last Council. (*DM* 1)

From the above, it should be clear that the mystery of the human person can be unravelled by the consideration of the fundamental theme of relationship. The hermeneutical issues must acknowledge the folly of sinful disconnectedness, discern them in the light of biblical teachings and Tradition. The mystery of man cannot be fully grasped outside the vital relation with the Trinity. God is love. The human person is a being for whom the only suitable dynamism is love.

According to John Paul II: "Freedom lies at the basis of the nuptial meaning of the body. The human body, with its sex, and its masculinity and femininity seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness [...]. It includes [...] the capacity of expressing love"<sup>4</sup>. The body with its masculinity and femininity is a metaphor of the Trinitarian mystery in its relation to the cosmos and principally to human beings. Marital union is an earthly image of God's own Trinitarian exchange of love. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*; hereafter referred to as *CCC*, no. 221).

This is in line with the patristic tradition. For instance, Augustine, a towering Church Father in the Western Church and the most prolific of the theologians discovered the traces (*vestigia*) of Trinity in creation.<sup>5</sup> Augustine considers theology as faith seeking understanding. For him, of all the images of God, the proper image of God is man, and more specifically, the human soul. The unity of the divine nature and plurality of persons beckons an understanding of relationality as an ontological category. In one divine nature there are three persons-the Father as the unoriginated or begotten by none; the Son begotten of the Father from all eternity and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son.<sup>6</sup>

The Trinity is at the heart of the Christian faith and Christian life. Augustine avoided subordinationism even when elaborating economic theologies.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body*, 63.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), 272.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. The Roman Missal, *Preface for the Mass of the Holy Trinity*.



A distinction is to be made between economic Trinity and Immanent (transcendental) Trinity. Thus when we say that we are made in the image of the Trinity, we refer to economic Trinity. The Church's mission is to unravel the transcendental openness of man to fullness of life. Let us try to elaborate the meaning of the term person as appropriated in ecclesial reception.

#### ECCLESIOLOGICAL TRANSPOSITION OF THE PERSON AS *IMAGO DEI*

For the Church all ways lead to man (cf. *RH*, no. 14). The Church accompanies man in all phases of human life cycle. In *Dominum et Vivificantem*, John Paul II writes: "The Church, rooted through her own mystery in the Trinitarian plan of salvation, with good reason regards herself as the 'sacrament of the unity of the whole human race'" (*DV*, no. 64). The Church's conscious effort to bring together the twofold polarity of creation and redemption; God and man is more than ever to be guarded and above all shared by her to all. Man in his personal being as well as social being is the focus of the Church's being and threefold role of governing, sanctifying and prophesying.

The term person seems to have been introduced into Christianity in the Christological and Trinitarian debates in the first century. Historically and today, theology's struggle with the full meaning of person offer guidelines to a better understanding of how to actualize ourselves as human persons. Moreover, in this endeavour, the scholastic concern of finding a theoretic that could deal with all questions scientifically, methodically and systematically is to be reappropriated.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the scholastic distinction between the natural and the supernatural, for example may imply a distinction between "natural" man and "ecclesial" man. John D. Zizioulas clarifies that the Church Father's term of divinization which implies participation in the divine life is akin to the person of ecclesial existence. This has got to do with the personality that baptism gives. Thus the Church indeed is a "new" family of God. There is a parallel between the biological personality and ecclesial personality. For the new ecclesial personality, "father" is not the physical progenitor. He is the one who art in heaven. However this transcendence does not imply "social distancing"

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Stephen J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2007), 123.



or remoteness and indifference. The person from nature or biology is encumbered with a certain “natural exclusivism” of eroticism.<sup>8</sup>

Authentic Christology aims at bestowing upon man the realization of the ultimate quest; that is, a mature person, not as a “mask”-truncated figure – but as authentic historical reality. Jesus Christ as the definitive image of God realizes in history the very reality of the person.<sup>9</sup> John Paul II in his 1998 encyclical, *Fides et Ratio* highlights: “According to the Apostle, it was part of the original plan of the creation that reason should without difficulty reach beyond the sensory data to the origin of all things: the Creator” (*FR*, no. 22). The disobedience of man in their quest to be full masters of themselves and of their morality, tampered with this ready access to God and confirmation of the true form and content of complete humanism. The fundamental contribution of the Church to humanity and peoples is not simply technical solutions but the ecclesiological formation of consciences and the promotion of a culture that truly upholds holistic view and dignity of humanity.

Faith is a gift of God consented to and accepted by the good will of man. The evil will of man, a result of original fall and sinful attachments has manifested itself in the dehumanizing agenda. Today the encumbrance of ill will causes not only desperation of misery, isolationism but also fragmentizing abomination of wretchedness. Precisely Vatican Council I and Vatican Council II put premium on historical facet. Revelation has established in history a point of locus of reference which cannot be snubbed if the truth of human life is to be known (cf. *FR*, no. 14).

Underpinning all theological endeavour as the understanding of faith according to diverse contexts, it is theologically sound to contextualize John Paul II's approach to anthropology. This will lead us to show the relevance of his pontificate and teachings on the dignity of the human person, not only globally but also regionally in Africa.

#### AFRICAN PERSONALITY DISTORTED BY COLONIALISM? REVIEWING THE QUESTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Immediately before, during and immediately after Vatican Council II many African countries gained independence. Having freed themselves from the

<sup>8</sup> Cf. John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 49–65.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.



yoke of colonialism, the Africans trying to assert themselves resorted to search for their true identity socially, culturally and politically. “Most African countries became independent after the 1950s. The struggle for independence was also accompanied by nationalistic awareness and cultural identity.”<sup>10</sup>

The incidence took varied orientations, notable among them include indigenization of the Church in Africa. Some of these phenomena were officially acknowledged by Vatican Council II, for instance the document *Optatam Totius* sanctioned theologies from new socio-cultural contexts, particularly Africa among others (no. 16). John Paul II built on the gains and proposed some specifics of what he termed as new evangelization to the Church in Africa, and particularly the local Church in Kenya. I want to highlight inculturation among them.

#### GUARDING THE FLAME OF THE APOSTLES: FROM EVANGELIZATION TO NEW EVANGELIZATION

John Paul II's initial usage of the expression “new evangelization” was in March, 1983. He was on a missionary journey to Latin America. The Pope insisted that new evangelization is innovative in ardour, methods, and expression. This apostolic journey covered Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize and Haiti (March 2–10, 1983). In his address to the Latin American Bishops at the opening of a CELAM Assembly, he reminded them then of the impending celebration of the fifth centenary of the discovery of America in 1992. His words are: “The celebration of a half a millennium of evangelization will have as its full meaning if it is a renewed commitment on your part, as Bishops, together with your Presbytery and the faithful, a commitment not to re-evangelization but to a new evangelization. New in your enthusiasm, in your methods, in your expressions.”<sup>11</sup>

In his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II speaks of philosophy as the mirror which reflects the culture of a people. He points out that a philosophy which progresses in agreement with faith is part of the evangelization of culture which Paul VI offered as one of the fundamental goals of evangelization; but it also answers the pressing need of a new evangelization to be explored in areas

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<sup>10</sup> Sebastian Karotemprel (ed.), *Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1995), 213.

<sup>11</sup> Address of John Paul II at the Opening of the XIX CELAM Assembly, Port-au-Prince Cathedral, Haiti, Wednesday, March 9, 1983.



and cultures which have a long-standing Christian tradition given the challenges the new millennium seems to entail such as secularism (cf. *FR*, no. 103).

John Paul II gives some models of apostolicity of evangelization in *Ecclesia in Africa* such as Proclamation (nos. 57–58), Sacramental Evangelization (no. 73), Inculturation (no. 59), and Life Witness (no. 77). It is not farfetched to think that for the Church in Africa the implementation of inculturation in areas of theology and liturgy would constitute a new evangelization as proposed by John Paul II. Underpinning his appeal to new evangelization is the unstinting promotion both of the defence of human dignity and the proclamation of the gospel truth (cf. *FR*, no. 102) in line with the apostolic tradition.

Thus, he clarified in his 2001 Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, that the new evangelization is not about inventing a “new programme” since the programme already exists as found in Scripture and Tradition. It is Christ centred, thus, Christological and Trinitarian. It has its centre in Christ to be known and loved, so that in him through the power of the Holy Spirit we may partake of the life of the triune God (cf. *NMI*, no. 29). New evangelization is not at variance with the values of initial or on-going formation of the people of God in the apostolic faith. It is new in its emphasis on the dignity of the human person; defence of life in all its stages with renewed conviction and vigour.

John Paul II philosophic-theological input clarifies that in our time the encounter of men and women of today with different currents of thought, scientific hypotheses and Christian faith and hope further tends towards dichotomizing the structure of many in their epistemic search for the ultimate truths (cf. *FR*, no. 27). Hypotheses may fascinate but do not satisfy. There is a yearning for God, the ultimate truth. This should be the focus for the crux of new evangelization.

His successor, Benedict XVI, in the post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Africae Munus* (2011), gives an outline of new evangelization, its Christocentric relevance to African Christianity now and in future. The new evangelization must recognize the primacy of the human person within the ecclesial context as a member of Christ's faithful empowered by the Spirit of the risen Lord (cf. *AM*, nos. 165, 171).

Therefore we submit that the new evangelization for the Church in Africa is principally to reawaken authentic African consciousness and not their Christian roots. The latter may be more appropriate to the Church in Europe and America. From this new evangelization to reawaken authentic African consciousness it follows that the African spirit is to draw nourishment from



the charismatic secrets of Christianity (patristic, exegetic and theological tradition of the Church) so that it may flow again in beauty and knowledge in true African elegance.<sup>12</sup>

I want to draw attention, at this point, to John Paul II first apostolic journey to Kenya, and what transpired in terms of a theology for the new evangelization. In his address to the bishops of Kenya, John Paul II precisely reminded them that as the primary agents of evangelization in their local Churches, their focus must be rigorously theological and anthropocentric within their contexts. His words are: “The ‘acculturation’ or ‘inculturation’ which you rightly promote will truly be a reflection of the Incarnation of the Word, when a culture transformed and regenerated by the Gospel, brings forth from its own living tradition original expressions of Christian life.”<sup>13</sup> There are some corollaries of the significance of John Paul II’s pontificate especially as far as his teachings on the dignity of the human person are concerned. Notably, for a more rooted evangelization in the local Church in Kenya the movements for a right cultural identity, justice and peace; democratization, women emancipation, ecological emancipation in the midst of Western technological imperialism are to be seen as avenues for a better discernment of the dignity of the human person in the interests of faith enlightened by reason.

#### IMPORTANCE OF THE PONTIFICATE OF JOHN PAUL II TO KENYA

John Paul II exhortation to the bishops of Kenya in 1980 show, among other issues, that the search for a full-fledged understanding of the human person is not a mere academic gimmick. The promotion of inculturation goals is meant to elevate a culture that truly reverberates with and answers to all the questions of humanity (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

In 2010, the Kenyan people obtained a new constitution as promulgated by the then President Mwai Kibaki.<sup>14</sup> Before that, the process had been long and arduous. The overriding aim was to have a very good constitutional dispensation interested in safeguarding authentic dignity, and rights of the citizens. The end-game for a Christian in all these and within a local Church is to bring harmony between juridical conception of person and communion.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Paul VI, Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration during the Conclusion of the Symposium Organized by the Bishops of Africa, Kampala (Uganda) 31 July 1969.

<sup>13</sup> Address of John Paul II to the Bishops of Kenya, Nairobi, Wednesday, May 7, 1980.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Republic of Kenya, *The Constitution of Kenya*, 2010.



As the striving for the good of man surmounts from diverse sectors, the specific contribution of theology is to emphasize and reemphasize the integral understanding of freedom. Only Jesus Christ gives integral freedom. In John 8:36 we read: "So if a son frees you, then you will truly be free." An integral humanity is to be self through others in a vital linking. The new sensitivities, coupled with the authentic embedded fact of how we ought to relate, are privileged avenues of boundless possibilities of a truly thriving humanity.

The Church is a family of God, a home of communion and therefore a place where the full spectrum of humanity can so beneficially be actualized. And as Francis puts it:

The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that Trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity. (*LS*, no. 240)

In the local Churches, the ordained priest should not think and act as if he is appointed to govern rather apart from presiding at the Eucharist and in the sacrament of reconciliation, he should consider it his specific duty to discover the charismata of his faithful. He should create an environment for them to exercise their non-ordained ministries.

John Paul II taught by his teachings and life witness in the overall ecclesial witness of faith, how the leaders of the Church should govern the people of God; how the members of the Church ought to appreciate their ingenuity and give a contribution to the universal Church for mutual enrichment. Christ is the head of redeemed humanity. Christ is the head of the Church, the family of God. He gives them the life of the triune God in his condescending salvific activity. This in turn elevates man to the glory of God.

## CONCLUSION

In his condescension, God became man, *katabatically*, in the power of the Holy Spirit, so as to enter into a relationship with humanity. This is a mystery of kenosis, the surrendering of the divine form, taking the human form and humbler yet taking the form of a servant (cf. Phil. 2:5–11). The Christological import of authentic humanity is that we participate in the life of God in the



elevating movement-*anabatically*-through Christ. The mystery of divine filiation is that human persons are called to actively partake in the life of God. Human persons actualize themselves dialogically. Ecclesiologically the commitment to make persons meet Christ in a transformative manner is an essential dimension of the Church's evangelizing mission. Though this aspect is not detached from succouring man's material welfare. Human rights are certainly not absolute in and of themselves, but always involve resultant duties. Conceivably only the right to life may not be forfeited, save for self-defence, for even if one fails in one's duties to abstain from attacking innocent persons, it is deemed that the modern states can render the aggressor unable to inflict harm. Thus death penalty as a form of justice delivery is a controversial point today and many modern states have repealed that provision. Basing himself on the teachings of St. John Paul II and in line with the principle of genuine development of doctrine, Pope Francis recently (in 2018) revised Church's teaching on death penalty. Thus CCC no. 2267 teaches the inadmissibility of death punishment in that the dignity of the person remains even after the commission of severe criminalities. Moreover, more effective schemes of custody have been advanced, which guarantee the due protection of citizens.

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CHRYSTOLOGICZNO-TRYNITARNA ANTROPOLOGIA JANA PAWŁA II:  
JEJ WPŁYW NA EWANGELIZACJĘ W KENII

Streszczenie

Artykuł ma na celu przedstawienie podejścia Jana Pawła II do antropologii chrześcijańskiej poprzez pryzmat wybranych encyklik, w szczególności *Redemptor Hominis*, *Dives in Misericordiae*, *Dominum Vivificantem*, oraz przemówień skierowanych do biskupów Kenii podczas jego pierwszej wizyty w tym kraju w 1980 roku. Chrześcijańskie i trynitarne rozumienie godności ludzkiej przez Jana Pawła II ma ogromne znaczenie dla podejścia skoncentrowanego na osobie w wielu kwestiach zarówno kościelnych, jak i cywilnych. Papieskie podejście do antropologii oferuje nowe perspektywy mogące prowadzić do dalszego rozwoju antropologii chrześcijańskiej i ewangelizacji. Opierając się głównie na danych biblijnych i rozwijając temat człowieka stworzonego na obraz Boży (*imago Dei*), wyjaśnia, że wcielenie Syna Bożego nadało życiu ludzkiemu wymiar, jaki Bóg zamierzał dla człowieka w stanie pierwotnym, przed upadkiem. Jan Paweł II przyczyniał się do rozwoju dyskusji na temat godności ludzkiej, wolności i odpowiedzialności, zgodnie ze swoim charakterystycznym podejściem teologicznym, oświeconym jego filozoficznym światopoglądem. Artykuł ten analizuje konsekwencje chrystologiczno-trynitarne podejścia Jana Pawła II do osoby ludzkiej dla rzeczywistości wiary chrześcijańskiej na całym świecie, a w szczególności w Afryce; nieustanne wysiłki Kościoła, aby skuteczniej przyjmować Słowo Boże, oraz koncepcję nowej ewangelizacji jako kluczowe dziedzictwo pontyfikatu papieża św. Jana Pawła II.

**Słowa kluczowe:** podejście trynitarne; antropologia; ewangelizacja; Kenia