

## THE NEED FOR ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION AND THE CANONICAL STANDARD. ANALYSIS IN THE LIGHT OF THE LATEST DOCUMENTS OF THE MAGISTERIUM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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**Abstract.** Due to the current situation of the ecological crisis, the author takes up the topic of the analysis of the most recent Church Magisterium. He concludes that it is in the light of the documents *Laudato si'*, *Evangelii gaudium*, *Fratelli tutti*, etc. of Pope Francis, that can find a doctrine which (in terms of the need for ecological conversion) is normative, although informal and take the conviction that maybe this doctrine in line with the words of Cardinal Coccopalmero, former president of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, will soon be introduced into the Code of Canon Law.

**Keywords:** Church Magisterium, canon law, ecological crisis, environmental education, socio-environmental crisis

### INTRODUCTION

In the teaching of the Catholic Church, facts have emerged that encourage us to address, in view of current canonical doctrine, the issue of the need for ecological conversion. In agreement with the thesis contained in the article: *Edukacja ekologiczna w dokumentach Kościoła oraz prawie kanonicznym*, that “it is not easy to discuss the problems of protecting the environment of human life, which are anchored in the legislation of the Church, because in Canon Law we do not find any norm that directly addresses this issue”<sup>1</sup> [Krajewski 2011, 145], it should be noted that the encyclical of Pope Francis *Laudato si'*,<sup>2</sup> and the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*,<sup>3</sup> gives a clear indication that the Church’s teachings are to be looked at again in this matter.

An important assumption for our analysis is the concept of canon law, understood as “a set of laws issued by the competent authority of the Church, guarding

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<sup>1</sup> The author of this article has translated the citation.

<sup>2</sup> Franciscus PP., Litterae encyclicae *Laudato si'* de communi domo colenda (24.05.2015), AAS 107 (2015), p. 847–945 [hereinafter: LS].

<sup>3</sup> Francis, Encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti* on fraternity and social friendship (03.10.2020) [hereinafter: FT], [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html) [accessed: 05.01.2021].

those who live in the community of Christ.”<sup>4</sup> The point is, however, that such a collection does not have to be limited to the images contained in the Code of Canon Law. “The legal force – however different in terms of scope and validity – may have standards issued by, among others: popes, councils, synods, religious institutes, episcopal conferences or dicasteries of the Roman Curia” [Krzywkowska and Kubala 2016, 137]. Moreover, the Catholic Church and the Holy See,<sup>5</sup> in canonical doctrine, have the character of moral persons [Dzierżon 2014, 7–22], because they are of “the very establishment of God” (Canon 113, para. 1 CIC/83). This means that the source of these institutions and the norms they emanate is simply God’s law [Krzywkowska and Kubala 2016, 138]. The Catechism of the Catholic Church sees it similarly in no. 340.<sup>6</sup>

The apostolic constitution of Pope John Paul II *Sacrae disciplinae legis*<sup>7</sup> provides additional clarification in this area. It states that the Code of Canon Law includes “a long legacy of law, which is contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments, and from which the entire legal and legislative tradition of the Church derives as if from its first source” (SDL 14). In this light, CIC/83 is “conceived of as a great transmission lane that transmits this doctrine to canonic language” (SDL 14). And although it is not possible to translate (the whole) picture of the Church into canonical language [Wróbel 2016, 121–47; Sobański 1972, 59–70], if the ecological attitude of the faithful is to be the result of education and upbringing, those in turn “must result from a «programme» outlined by law and doctrine” [Krajewski 2011, 146]. It is supposed to correspond to the trend, present in all legal systems, to “describe in the most precise and professional language possible a catalogue of rights and obligations of certain persons and categories of natural persons, persons and categories of legal persons” [Adamowicz 2020, 3].

The search center is the question about the content and doctrinal validation of the ecological norm, which on the assumptions of the idea of ecological conversion would be transposed into the CIC/83. Such a norm could be a stimulus on the way to conversion if this norm would contain a content calling the faithful to action that would integrate humanity with all creation that desires salvation. This norm should include not only ideas and concepts of action, but also “first of all, about motivations arising from spirituality to strengthen the passion for the care of the world” (LS 216).

<sup>4</sup> *Codex Iuris Canonici auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus* (25.01.1983), AAS 75 (1983), pars II, p. 1–317 [hereinafter: CIC/83], Canon 1752.

<sup>5</sup> Act of 17 May 1989 on relations between the State and the Catholic Church in the Republic of Poland, Journal of Laws of 2019, item 1347, Article 6(1); Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland of 28 July 1993, Journal of Laws of 1998, No. 51, item 318, Article 4(1).

<sup>6</sup> *Catechismus Catholicae Ecclesiae*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1997 [hereinafter: CCE].

<sup>7</sup> *Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Constitutio apostolica Sacrae disciplinae legis* (25.01.1983) [hereinafter: SDL], in: CIC/83, p. 7–17.

## 1. WHY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS COMMITTED TO PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES

The subject of the crisis, ecological sin, the need for conversion, etc., indicates the existence of certain deficiencies in the moral attitude of the faithful as well as in the legal order. Their essence, meaning and scope has already been shown by John XXIII<sup>8</sup> – in the context of sanctity of life and demography; Paul VI<sup>9</sup> – in the sense of calling for the integral development of man; John Paul II<sup>10</sup> – talking about the need for human ecology [Babiński 2012, 249–64]; Benedict XVI<sup>11</sup> – recognizing the issues of ecology as part of the integral development of man [Zagończyk 2015, 79–92], and now Pope Francis in the encyclical *LS* or *FT* – demanding common, i.e. global concern for a common home [Twardziłowski 2017, 135]. And this is (it seems) sufficient to put forward the thesis that there is a need to introduce into *CIC/83* as well such regulations that would speak of the need for ecological conversion. These regulations could have their special place in the Church's current doctrine of education and freedom of conscience.<sup>12</sup> That is, with reference to canon 217 of the *CIC/83*, under which the baptised “have the right to a Christian upbringing, by which they should be properly prepared for the maturity of the human person” [Krajczyński 2005, 171; Gręźlikowski 2009, 180].

The idea is to provide the faithful at the level of universal law with such normative means (i.e. assistance, instruction, etc.) so that, when making a concrete choice, they know what applies to them and what does not, where their objectified good is, whether in terms of environmental education or the formation of an ecological conscience. If the meaning of God's law “is discovered only by those who have found it, they stand by it and follow it” (Canon 748, para. 1 *CIC/83*), this is a particularly important observation for the church legislature. When establishing an ecological standard, it should take into account (apart from its material subject matter), the cognitive and existential conditions of its recipients. The question of

<sup>8</sup> Ioannes PP. XXIII, Litterae encyclicae de pace omnium gentium in veritate, iustitia, caritate, libertate constituenda *Pacem in terris* (11.04.1965), AAS 55 (1963), p. 257–304, no. 2; Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis *Gaudium et spes* (07.12.1965), AAS 58 (1966), p. 1025–115, no. 31, 39, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Paulus PP. VI, Litterae encyclicae de populorum progressionem promovenda *Populorum progressio* (26.03.1967), AAS 59 (1967), p. 257–99.

<sup>10</sup> Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Litterae encyclicae saeculo ipso Encyclicis ab editis litteris «Rerum novarum» transacto *Centesimus annus* (01.05.1991), AAS 83 (1991), p. 793–867, no. 38; Idem, Litterae encyclicae vicesimo expleto anno ab editis Litteris Encyclicis a verbis «Populorum progressio» incipientibus *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (30.12.1987), AAS 80 (1988), p. 513–86, no. 26; Idem, *Stworzenie glosi wielkość Boga*. Speech on the Angel of the Lord, Lorenzago di Cadore (23.08.1992), “L'Osservatore Romano” (Polish edition), 13/10 (1992), p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> Benedictus PP. XVI, Litterae encyclicae de humana integra progressionem in caritate veritateque *Caritas in veritate* (29.06.2009), AAS 101 (2009), p. 641–709, no. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Declaratio de educatione christiana *Gravissimum educationis* (28.10.1965), AAS 58 (1966), p. 728–39.

whether a potential believer will be able to understand it and practice it adequately highlights a specific difficulty here, as it lies between the ideology and doctrine of the Catholic Church. That is why in this field two basic motivational elements can be seen to interweave. One is economic and health-related, and the other is ethical and religious. The report: *Survey of the Consciousness and Ecological Behaviour of the People of Poland* speaks about this fact. It shows that the average citizen wants to protect the natural environment for reasons of: a) health; b) concern for future generations<sup>13</sup> [Kawulka 2010].

Moreover, the contemporary notion of the ecological norm is determined by the fact that the Church's traditional doctrine has seen the position of man in the world in the light of anthropology based on personal and Christian dignity (Canon 208–233 CIC/83). If, therefore, today he is being urged (in his primacy over creation) to rethink his Christian duties, it is worth recalling that the concept of conversion according to the document *Dignity and the Rights of the Human Being*, the International Theological Commission (1983), means accepting the kerygma of faith in the form of accepting “many consequences in every field of activity.”<sup>14</sup> It also means that if we recognise that the fundamental aim of the CIC/83 is the good of the faithful, understood as their “supernatural happiness” [Dzięga 2019, 2879], then each of them, being obliged to acknowledge their grave sins, according to Canon 989 CIC/83, should also see the call to an examination of conscience in the context of ecological sin.

However, the task of caring for ecological conversion that the Church has set itself today is not an easy one. The new vision of Pope Francis' human community must resist the criticism that it is detached from the Tradition of the Catholic Church. This criticism, however, forgets that the papal invitation to ecological cooperation of all people (as brothers) is to be an opportunity to evangelise. The exposition, first in the Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*,<sup>15</sup> and then in LS, FT 8, of the slogan: “we cannot act alone, we must revive the desire for brotherhood among all,” because it expresses the biblical conviction that only the unification of people (Jn 17, 20–6) can save not only the environment of human life from catastrophe, but humanity itself from eternal condemnation. In other words, if we say that “no one saves himself [...] we need a community to support us” (FT 54), what is important here is that the deeper meaning of this principle can also be found in CIC/83. This is made clear by Canon 1752 when it says: “salus animarum suprema lex esto” – the salvation of souls (that is, of all the brothers) by the highest law in the Church [Dyduch 2014, 23].

Moreover, regardless of the controversy that may arise in connection with the Catholic Church's philosophy of nature [Bochenek 2015, 140], it is, however, the

<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.gov.pl/web/klimat/badania-swiadomosci-ekologicznej> [accessed: 11.12. 2020].

<sup>14</sup> See [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_1983\\_dignita-diritti\\_pl.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1983_dignita-diritti_pl.html) [accessed: 12.12.2020].

<sup>15</sup> Franciscus PP., Adhortatio apostolica *Evangelii gaudium* de Evangelio Nuntiando nostra aetate (24.11.2013), AAS 105 (2013), p. 1019–137, Chapters II and IV.

relationship that the Church has built “between man and the reality around him” that has always been based on the truth (whether natural or revealed) [Krajewski 2011, 147–48]. Hence, “the radical current of the ecological hermeneutics of the Bible, which is currently developing, denies and rejects the anthropocentric approach, and instead proposes and adopts a strictly biocentric perspective as the only legitimate one,” is negatively assessed [Twardziłowski 2017, 147]. And this is (as it seems) a thesis which should become (also in the normative aspect) the important content of the ecological catechesis [Kostorz 2015, 59–69], which “under the guidance of the legitimate ecclesiastical authority, belongs to all the members of the Church, in the proper part of each one” (Canon 774, para. 1 CIC/83).

In addition, the issue of the need for ecological conversion is covered by criminal awareness [Zawłocki 2014, 127–46]. This is a special context. It is necessary to know that the Church, starting from the fact of Revelation, has always linked the issue of the protection of creation with the issue of the eternal salvation of man, and has been persistent in this field. Thus, this notion of punishment “for offences against the obligation to raise children Catholic in the Codes of Canon Law” [Wąsik 2004, 463–85], can now be extended to include negligence in the field of environmental education, i.e. so-called ecological sin.

In accordance with Canon 266, para. 2 CIC/83, the responsibility for religious and moral education belongs to parents, because they give life, but not only. There’s something more. His dignity is also determined by his participation in the pedagogy of God the Father,<sup>16</sup> as well as by the fact that he consists in the “spiritual birth of a child”<sup>17</sup> [Krajczyński 2005, 154], and that it has its place in state legislation,<sup>18</sup> so it cannot be abandoned (for some reason).

## 2. UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION IN THE TRADITIONAL CHURCH DOCTRINE

In the doctrine of the Catholic Church there has always been a conviction that “being defenders of God’s work is an essential part of an honest life.”<sup>19</sup> John Paul II has repeatedly reminded us of our duty to care for creation, “leading us directly out of faith in God the Creator and relying on the texts of Scripture and rational knowledge”<sup>20</sup> [Twardziłowski 2017, 137]. This time, however, the issue of “edu-

<sup>16</sup> Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio apostolica de Familiae Christianae muneribus in mundo huius temporis *Familiaris consortio* (22.11.1981), AAS 74 (1982), p. 81–191, no. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Idem, Litterae Familiis ipso volente Sacro Familiae anno MCMXCIV *Gratissimam sane* (2.02.1994), AAS 86 (1994), p. 868–925, no. 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Carta dei Diritti della Famiglia presentata dalla Sante Sede a tutte le persone, istituzioni ed autorità ed autorità interessate alla missione della famiglia nel mondo di oggi* (22.10.1983), “Communicationes” 15 (1983), no. 2, p. 140–52.

<sup>19</sup> See [http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/pl/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20091208\\_xliii-world-day-peace.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/pl/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace.html) [accessed: 16.12.2020].

<sup>20</sup> Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Ob diem paci fovendae anno MCMXC dicatum missus. *La paix avec Dieu Créateur – la paix avec toute la création* (08.12.1989), AAS 82 (1990), p. 147–56.

cation and ecological conversion”<sup>21</sup> is about the need to implement a “paradigm of integral ecology” that is anchored in respect for creation. Here the Church is aware that this is a task that “requires a far-reaching vision that is to be expressed in places and spaces where education and culture are cultivated and transmitted, awareness is created, an attitude of political, scientific and economic responsibility is formed” (HS, p. 16).

In other words, even if the Church’s opening up to environmental issues is considered to be the moment of Pope Paul VI’s meeting “with members of an organisation dealing with environmental issues” [Bochenek 2015, 140], it is essential from a doctrinal point of view that the Pope, when describing the relationship between man and nature, used terms such as “respect and unity,” which have personal characteristics. This is the year 1972, when a document was written, considered to be the official voice of the Catholic Church, entitled: *The position of the Holy See towards environmental protection*. “Since man is one with nature, it is necessary to replace its previous brutal exploitation with respect for the biosphere seen as a whole” [ibid., 143].

Thus, if in the ecological optics of Pope Francis, the concept of “respect for nature” is the basic principle of reference, then in the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, this optics was already well known. This is the catechism’s phrase: “every creature has its goodness and perfection” (CCE 339), created the framework for reflection, as well as for the norms on subjective responsibility for the environment. And perhaps this is why Pope Francis, in his encyclical LS, followed, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, John Paul II, who still understood the problems of ecology in terms of “lack of harmony with the natural world.”<sup>22</sup> The Commission has also raised the responsibility for anti-environmental attitudes to the level of sin, the need for conversion, change of mentality, etc. He did so in an unambiguous way, i.e., one which, in the interpretation of Canon 15, para. 1 CIC/83, does not recognise ignorance, i.e. ignorance or error.<sup>23</sup> Thus in LS we find what the Church’s sacramental doctrine on sin already existed as codified in Canon 914, 916, 959 CIC/83 and no. 1422–484 CCE, etc. [Lech 2017, 82]. This is the conviction that “a profound interior conversion in the relationship to creation must take place within the context of the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. What is needed is our penance, repentance, regret «for the evil we do to our common home»” (FT 57).

<sup>21</sup> *Tavolo interdicasteriale sull'ecologia integrale. In cammino per la cura della casa comune. A cinque anni dalla Laudato si'* (31.05.2020), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2020 [hereinafter: HS], p. 20–30.

<sup>22</sup> Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Ob diem paci fovendae anno MCMXC dicatum missus.

<sup>23</sup> “§. Ignorance or mistake regarding the annulling or rendering inoperative acts shall not prevent their effects, unless otherwise expressly stated. § 2. There shall be no presumption of ignorance or error with respect to a law, a penalty, or with respect to one’s own or someone else’s notorious fact; but it shall be presumed with respect to someone else’s notorious fact until the contrary is proven” (Canon 15 CIC/83).

This need for conversion is theocentric in nature and is a concept that can be described as traditional. It directs the sinner's man to God the Creator, in the awareness that "the dramatic effects of ecological recklessness are always the result of sin" (HS 39), that is, some kind of departure from God.<sup>24</sup> It is a formative, but also expressive task, touching upon the very interior of Christian spirituality, which is inscribed in the content of Canon 960, 987–991 CIC/83, which are the essential need to enter and fulfil the conditions of the sacrament – "penance and reconciliation." This is an "objective world order," read "according to the spirit of the present time" (according to Pope Francis), becomes the basis for how to "define a moral code [...] with regard to environmental issues" [Bochenek 2015, 153].

The point is that even if the world was created as a good one, the man who was put at the heart of it did not have absolute freedom. He was not allowed to eat fruit from a forbidden tree. This fact is momentous enough to understand that the rules that Pope Francis talks about in relation to ecology can only be laid down and implemented in the theocentric option. I.e. under the condition that they are directed to the realization of the will of the Creator himself, who wanted everything he created to be subject to the laws of good, recognized in the act of freedom of conscience (Canon 748, para. 1–2 CIC/83). This has its reference to the Apostolic Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*<sup>25</sup>: "for man has a law inscribed in his heart by God; obedience to this law constitutes precisely his dignity and according to him he will be judged" [Sitarz 2018, 76].

If we see the *raison d'être* of canon law in the study of Scripture, in the sense that "if one does not know Scripture, it is easy to believe that canon law is superfluous" [Kasprzak 2005, 348], this may be the case when it comes to the Church's teaching in general and its environmental doctrine in particular. Pope John Paul II warned against this when he spoke to the Pontifical Council on Legal Texts: "an even more dangerous form of reductionism is to try to interpret and apply Church laws in isolation from the doctrine of the Magisterium."<sup>26</sup> One could also conclude here that the normative, possibly to be incorporated into the CIC/83, would express the content of the idea of ecological conversion in the conviction that the Catholic Church has always been concerned with man and the world, which should aim at its God Father and Creator in a theologically established hierarchy (i.e. in order, harmony, etc.).<sup>27</sup>

This fact makes a significant difference when we want to distance ourselves from the philosophical idea of biocentrism in line with the content of the LS, FT,

<sup>24</sup> Jan Paweł II, Katecheza "Stworzenie a słuszna autonomia rzeczy stworzonych" (02.04.1986), "L'Osservatore Romano" (Polish edition), 4 (1986), p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio Pastoralis de Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis *Gaudium et spes* (07.12.1965), AAS 58 (1966), p. 1025–116, no. 16.

<sup>26</sup> John Paul II, The Holy Father's speech to the participants of the symposium of the Pontifical Council for Legal Texts: *Fundament teologiczny norm prawnych* (24.01.2003), "L'Osservatore Romano" (Polish edition), 5 (2003), p. 42–3.

<sup>27</sup> John Paul II, Catechesis: *Stworzenie a słuszna autonomia rzeczy stworzonych* (02.04.1986), "L'Osservatore Romano" (Polish edition), 4 (1986), p. 19.

HS, etc. documents. In them, the Church's Magisterium expresses its connection with the position that "you cannot defend nature unless you defend every human being," which has its due origin in God. Conversely, man "only in solidarity with the rest of creation, only with responsibility towards the world of animals, plants and things, can long live as the master of creation, without becoming a slave to his mania of greatness, a slave rejected by creation"<sup>28</sup> [Krajewski 2011, 149].

So, if we consider that "key concepts for understanding the post-conciliar teaching of the Church have become terms: «integral ecology» and «integral human development»" [Stelmach 2019], and that all this has already been incorporated in some way into the teachings of Pope Francis, it should also be recognised that only one question remains open. It is not so much a question of how the norm (which speaks of the need for ecological conversion) should be written into the content of the current canons of CIC/83, but how to transfer it into the framework of the traditionally lived Catholic faith. The precept as such cannot be (because) "properly applied without being rooted in the Catholic faith" [Grocholewski 2004, 21].

It seems that the dilemma as to whether the justification and announcement of the ecological standard to be attached to the CIC should be made due to the value and autonomy of creation, which is realized by the word: "respect," or rather because of the complete totality that created reality finds in relation to Christ Jesus, Saviour, and what are expressed by the words: "harmony, order, orderliness" [Twardziłowski 2017, 139], in fact does not exist. The decisive condition here is whether the issue of the shape of the ecological standard will be based strictly on the question of respect for the principle of justice, or also on the optics of equity, and whether it will continue to be "more flexible than any other law" [Grocholewski 2004, 21].

### 3. THE POSITIONS OF AMENDMENTS TO THE CODE OF CANON LAW

Combination of the topic of conversion and ecological education (which has been present in the Magisterium of the Catholic Church for some time) is in line with the need to introduce new regulations into canon law. And it is in connection with the ever stronger views existing in the Church, concerning the need to protect nature, that there is talk of a doctrinal and cultural trend. It is not surprising, therefore, that "in 2018, Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio announced the need to make certain changes to CIC/83 that would concern the ecological formation of the faithful."<sup>29</sup> His statement points to the fact that there are already enough reasons to justify such a record. It is a widely recognised principle that: "legitimises the law what determines its validity, the procedure for making laws, the

<sup>28</sup> Conferenza Episcopale Tedesca, *Dichiarazione su "Futuro della creazione e futuro dell'umanità"* (Fulda, settembre 1980), "Medicina e Morale" 2 (1990), p. 367–81.

<sup>29</sup> *Ekologiczny trend nie ominie Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego?*, <https://www.pch24.pl/ekologiczny-trend-nie-ominie-kodeksu-prawa-kanonicznego> [accessed: 07.07.2020].



procedure for justifying the law, the cultural heritage, the system of values, social communication, social consensus” [Piszko 2020, 355].

Taking into account how the process of the canonical law is being established and how extensive the scope of matters covered by the term “need for ecological conversion” is, it is necessary to have an in-depth ecclesiological awareness that the reception of such a new standard will be something exceptionally important for the quality of functioning of the entire Catholic community. The question of whether and how the faithful will accept the canonical norms established by the Church is a problem which is expressed in the fact that “the indication of the formal validity of the law remains vain and fruitless if the prescribed instruction is not fulfilled in practice. The argument that the law applies regardless of its reception is then little. In this way, religious life is not stimulated or community built” [Sobański 1990/1991, 79]. It seems that the controversies that could possibly arise here should rather relate to the interpretation of the provisions, i.e. how far they result from the choice of biblical hermeneutics, than to the essence of the law, its need and its amendments, the sources or the system of professed values.

The most important thing, however, is that there is an authoritative proposal to resolve the problematic situation of the lack of ecological provisions in the canonical legislation of the Catholic Church. If the former President of the Pontifical Council for Legal Texts, Cardinal Coccopalmero, states that: “the canons which concern the rights and duties of believers make no mention at all of one of the most important, namely the protection and development of the environment,”<sup>30</sup> it also adds that appropriate changes will be proposed for Pope Francis’ approval, and the new canon should take the following form: “Every Christian, aware that creation is a common home, has a serious duty not only not to destroy but also to improve, either through normal behaviour or through special initiatives, the environment in which each person is brought to life.” Moreover, according to the Cardinal, “the papal council, which he himself led until recently, should also request the addition of such a canon.”<sup>31</sup>

It is also important that the doctrinal background to the principle of ecological conversion (in the form proposed by Cardinal Coccopalmero), in addition to the need to carry out deeds of mercy [Poznański 2016], e.g. at the parish level,<sup>32</sup> may be, in addition to accompaniment and contemplation,<sup>33</sup> those guidelines that have

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction *The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church* (20.07.2020), <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/07/20/200720a.html> [accessed: 22.07.2020]: “the point is not only that Pope Francis modified the deeds of mercy that originated from the beginnings of Christianity, but that he placed the concern for creation in the context of contemplating God’s mercy.”

<sup>33</sup> Francis, Catechesis: *Wednesday audience* (16.08.2020), <https://deon.pl/kosciol/serwis-papieski/papiez-franciszek-przypomnial-wazne-slowa-sw-jana-pawla-ii-i-zachecil-polakow-do-wprowadzenia> [accessed: 17.09.2020]: “finally contemplating and caring: these are two attitudes that show the way to improve and restore balance in our relationship between people and creation. Very often, our relationship with creation seems to be one of enemies.”

been highlighted in the (already quoted here many times) document Holy See: *On the road of caring for the common home* (HS). In terms of how to achieve the most current ecological goals, this document, as edited jointly by many of the dicasteries of the Holy See, indicates what should be considered necessary and good by all the faithful, and what has been inscribed for many years in the process of their moral, i.e. spiritual and religious renewal. On the other hand, it seems that all this should correspond to the Code's provision on the ways of implementing the common good in the Catholic Church (Canon 223, para. 1 CIC/83).

Thus (it seems) that the matter of incorporation of an ecological normative into the CIC/83 should be looked at in an optic: a) adequate to the so-called *signs of the formation* of the conscience of the community of believers; b) taking into account the most important motivations existing on the part of parents, children, etc., but also the institutions of the Church and the state [Biały 2020, 21–32]; c) integrating in the work of ecological renewal of all people, seen as brothers of one God and Creator. For, looking at the need for ecological conversion, the salvific obligation to sanctify people (Canon 1752 CIC/83), as called with all creation to salvation in Christ, is imposed first. And all this according to the principle that “experience teaches that the attitude (of the faithful, as a supplicant) [...] is closely related to the whole religious life” [Janczewski 1998, 129].

## FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of (socioecological) documents of the Catholic Church's Magisterium, as well as of the literature on the subject, allows us to notice that its ethical and theological doctrine, which is the basis for canonical legislation, is based on cultural currents related to philosophical biocentrism (LS 91; HS 8) [Commoner 1971; Liszewski 2015, 36]. The point is that even if the teaching of the Catholic Church about the idea of fraternity has been extended by Pope Francis to the whole of creation, it has the imperative to link it with other traditional concepts such as salvation, holiness, missionaryism, sin, conversion, grace, the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, etc.

All of this means that the essence of the duty of ecological conversion remains the objective of making man sufficiently aware of his respect for nature and of his reconciliation with God, his Creator. The common denominator of the work (inner transformation) is therefore everything that results from the Revelation made in Christ the Lord, which aims to integrate all people as called to eternal salvation. The special function of unification and sanctification in this field has always been fulfilled by canonical law, e.g. through the call to works of love or solidarity (Canon 839, para. 1 CIC/83). In this sense, the normative norms of conversion, based on fraternity with all creation, would be enriched by a matter of appreciation of all those abilities “which God has bestowed on every believer [...] to develop his creativity and enthusiasm” (LS 220).

It seems that the standard for ecological conversion, in the amended CIC/83, should look like this: “Catholics, aware of their vocation to salvation, according to the will of Jesus Christ, should take the utmost account of environmental protection in their faith. The sense of respect for the environment, each believer should find in the duty of love of God the Creator and his neighbour, which is finally presented in the pages of Scripture. This dimension of concern for the environment should be every aspect of human life, since, by building good relations with man, man builds a sufficiently good relationship with an environment that “reflects something of God and contains a message” (LS 221).

A wider sense of environmental responsibility and the need to standardise this issue in canon law can be found in the warning that Pope Francis (at the consistory on 29 November 2020) addressed to the newly appointed cardinals: “Dear brothers, we all love Jesus, we all want to follow him, but we must always be vigilant to stay on his path. For we can be with him with our feet, with our bodies, our hearts can be far away and lead us astray” [Zawistowska 2020].

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