

## REVIEWS

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### **Review: Bishop Andrzej F. Dziuba *Służyć życiu* (Serving Life), Franciscan Fathers' Publishing House, Niepokalanów 2012, pp. 344**

**T**he issue of man, both concrete and at the same individual human being, will always draw attention to the fundamental issue of personal life, regardless many specific problems relating to people or different societies and communities. It, in turn, brings with it an extraordinary wealth of positive and negative traits, especially of the alternative: for or against life. Therefore, they will be like bright rays of light on the paths of human pilgrimage, but on the other hand, they will also be the shadows of negation, to put it mildly. Nevertheless, it must be added that today this reality sometimes even adopts brutal methods.

There is no doubt that this subject matter is particularly close to Catholic teaching, which is aware that man is ultimately the way of the Church, as St. John Paul II so strongly reminded us. This evangelical responsibility even imposes an interest in the man whom God wanted for themselves, and not as someone abstract, distant, or unknown but a concrete human person. Therefore, the anthropological reflection, both philosophical and theological, present in the Church is the complete opportunity for responsible answers to human questions about the man. That is the most appropriate environment for this reflection and creative reflection.

The author of the presented study is the Bishop of Łowicz and Full Professor at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, where he chairs the Department of the History of Moral Theology. In the Polish Episcopal Conference, he is, among others, the chairman of the Scientific Council. He was also appointed by the Holy See to the Church Concordat Committee. He is the author of many books and scientific articles on moral theology and Catholic social science. He has also published a dozen or so articles on bioethics. It is

worth noting that the presented paper is published as the third volume of an interesting series “Bioethics and Human Ecology.”

The book opens with a schematic introduction (pp. 5–6). The whole study is divided into 23 chapters, which in turn were divided into smaller paragraphs. It seems that it is enough to recall the titles of particular chapters to schematically introduce the content. Detailed issues specify the research analyses undertaken. The first of them *Kim jest człowiek?* (Who is man?) (pp. 7–44) is a kind of a clarification of the foreground of research anthropological and bioethical issues, with a relatively abundant reference to the Holy Scriptures.

The next chapters have the titles as follows: *Ciało – widzialne dzieło Boga* (Body – visible work of God) (pp. 45–53); *Drogi życia* (Ways of life) (pp. 55–64); *Zagrożenie szacunku dla życia i ciała człowieka* (Threat to respect for human life and body) (pp. 65–77); *Rodzina a dziecko nienarodzone* (Family and unborn child) (pp. 79–88); *Należy im się miłość. Służba zdrowia wobec nienarodzonych* (They deserve love. Health care for the unborn) (pp. 89–98); *Doświadczenie cierpienia i bólu* (Experience of suffering and pain) (pp. 99–110); *Misterium choroby* (Mystery of illness) (pp. 111–122); *Mysli o cierpieniu i bólu* (Thoughts about suffering and pain) (pp. 123–137); *Granica między życiem a śmiercią* (The border between life and death) (pp. 139–151); *Ludzkie drogi ku śmierci* (Human paths to death) (pp. 153–163).

The subsequent chapters focus on the matters such as *Przeszczepy* (Transplants) (pp. 165–176); *Wyzwanie eutanazji* (The Challenge of Euthanasia) (pp. 177–187); *Eutanazja* (Euthanasia) (pp. 189–200); *Dramat narkomanii* (Drama of Drug Addiction) (pp. 201–213); *AIDS i odpowiedzialność* (AIDS and Responsibility) (pp. 215–231); *Wobec AIDS. O współpracy chorego i lekarza* (Towards AIDS on cooperation between the sick and the doctor) (pp. 233–241); *Egoizm – ubóstwo – bieda* (Selfishness – poverty) (pp. 243–254); *Drogi przemocy* (Ways of violence) (pp. 255–265); *Terrorizm – droga negacji życia* (Terrorism – the way of life negation) (pp. 267–277); *Pokój z całym stworzeniem – ekologia* (Peace with all creation – ecology) (pp. 279–291); *Świat jako dar Boga i zadania człowieka* (World as a gift from God and a task for man) (pp. 293–299); *Czyniąc pokój* (Making peace) (pp. 301–312).

As far as the content is concerned, the book closes with a short ending (p. 313). The list of abbreviations (p. 315), the relatively extensive bibliography (pp. 317–337), and the detailed table of contents (pp. 339–344) are included. It is a good introduction, especially in the given subsections, to the detailed issues raised by the author.

A cursory reading of the Bishop Andrzej F. Dziuba’s book indicates that it is an opportunity to meet with an excellent both philosophical and theological outline of anthropology. It touches upon the basic premises of every responsible

reflection on man. It resounds in man in the vast richness of the truth of creation and redemption, as well as eschatological leaning. As such, he is desired by God. It is a concrete person in the physical, mental and spiritual traits, living at the same time *hic et nunc*. Such is the man since he will always make pilgrimages in the earthly realities of his fulfilment and, therefore, improvement, at least in God's intentions. This improvement is concurrently discovering oneself, and one's leaning towards others.

In this context, the author's comment is fully justified:

The sketches contained in the book are, in a sense, separate entities, but on the other hand, their common theme is man perceived as a person in many relations with God, other people, himself, and the world. It is touching our perhaps already lived experiences, or perhaps those we will have to face in the vast field of service for life (p. 6).

This relativity is a particular man's dynamism that emerges creatively from the pages of this anthropological study. These multiple personal references constitute a unique perspective and at the same time, a chance for fulfilment. Besides, this is also the desire to develop oneself with others and in relation to others.

It turns out that the richness of such general topics, as the titles of individual chapters of the presented book show schematically, hides many specific issues. The author does not avoid referring to them, although they still do not have more detailed proposals in ecclesiastical teaching. This courage and readiness to take up every subject indicates the author's competence and broadly understood the responsibility for a specific person. The Church must continuously give answers to ethical problems, which is even forced by the ordinary course of events. It is not infrequent that the world far from religion is also interested in Christian anthropological proposals and the system of values. In the long term, it is a concrete person who carries the need for such decisions, since, in particular, ethical choices require that.

As for the source base of the work of the Warsaw theologian, it is worth quoting once again his words from the introduction:

In the course of the emerging thoughts, there are only, whilst not always, references to the Holy Scriptures and both Covenants. On the other hand, the footnotes indicate the teaching of the Church, especially taking the preaching of the popes, particularly Blessed John Paul II and Benedict XVI, into account for obvious reasons. These indications are to allow for meeting with concern for a living faith and the resulting attitudes to life. Let these living signs of teaching be the lights on the paths of mind and heart around the problems of life (p. 6).

This procedure is intriguing and worthy of recognition as it is a proper form of promoting ecclesiastical teaching in the field of research.

The author skilfully searched for various texts and assigned them to the analysed topics and content, as well as more specific matters. It is as if he had given the essential foundation for the proposals, conclusions or remarks made. This mosaic of proposed texts resonates with touching the subtlest questions relating to man, concerning his personal, social and even communion traits. How rich the bioethical teaching of the Council, as well as synodal, papal, and ecclesiastical (including the Vatican dicastery and the Catechism of the Catholic Church) is. How this teaching breathes with the love of every human being from conception to natural death. It is a peculiar ability to enjoy man and teach it to others because many people need and even expect it.

Bishop Andrzej F. Dziuba leans over people with extraordinary respect and responsibility. It is great subtlety and even the love for the being that has been created in God's image and God's likeness. Not only is it an exceptional gift, but also an enormous task. He always sees in it the dignity of the perfect creature of God, wanted for himself, but at the same time inscribed in the earthly realism of life, which, however, is not its ultimate end. For this eschatological leaning, whose prospective appears already in the responsibility of earthly pilgrimage, will remain. Regardless of the complexity of the ways of life, especially those caused by sin, every human being is always worthy to serve life, as the author points out in the title of his study. The cry for the service for life, where a place for everyone exists breathes from the whole book.

The thoroughness of the content of the presented study allows for yet another direct experiencing human beauty, but simultaneously also his sinfulness and evil, even wickedness because this truth fits into human existence. That is why Bishop A.F. Dziuba so sincerely, with a prophetic spirit, draws attention to terrorism or violence, killing the unborn, and euthanasia. It is also an experience of pain, illness and suffering, poverty, and drug addiction. It is the image of the struggle of good against evil in man and the world throughout a fully conscious and responsible life. However, in no way, it affects the commitment to serve the life of every person, which is a specific motto already expressed in the title of the book.

Reading the study releases enormous gratitude for the teaching of the Catholic Church that is addressed to the faithful but also people of goodwill. How much concern for man, his dignity and life it includes. What would the world be like today if there were no such evangelical message? It is good that it resonates so legibly and clearly, and at the same time in a very communicative language. Perhaps this book will make a creative contribution to the service for life, and then its purpose would become a servant fact.

One can get the impression that the presented reflection appears to be a mature fruit of many years of studies and thoughts of the author. It is a part of developments in the field of bioethics, both philosophical and theological, which arouses broad interest. What is more, the Warsaw researcher capably builds his narration, so that the presented content is highly attractive. However, not only the form itself or other formal elements, but the content, its seriousness, and anthropological and existential meaning have always been crucial for Bishop Andrzej F. Dziuba.

Here is another study of human issues, especially with bioethical elements. It is appropriate for the author that he looks so broadly because ultimately, this is the realism of a real human being's life. Indeed, one could also expect many other issues here, such as in vitro, paedophilia, incest, pornography, the Internet, and prostitution. The service for life will, therefore, remain an ongoing personal and social obligation for man and humanity. Everyone should find their place here, so that in this way while serving life itself, they can see their own value.