

ABSTRACT

Search for the meaning of suffering in the life and work of bl. John Paul II.

During his long pontificate, John Paul II. commented on many current problems, but he perceived the matter of suffering in the most sensitive way. He boldly criticized all that is threatening to a man or brings pain. On the other hand, he strongly emphasized, that life in suffering is meaningful. What brought him to this conclusion? Which life events aided him in this search? How did he develop on his personal spiritual way, where he found meaning in suffering and thus became an authentic teacher in this area? The answers are proposed in this thesis, which is divided into three chapters: From a childhood to a priesthood; From the Priest Ordination to the Roman Pontificate; The Pontificate - the Pope "speaking" and "silent". The author advances chronologically and applies hagiographic-personalistic approach, which takes into account particular life events of a man and takes interest in his spiritual growth.

Already in his childhood and an early manhood, Karol Wojtyła was greatly tried by suffering. This is shown in quite a detail in the first chapter. First it is death of his mother and then unexpected death of his brother Edmund. In both cases the most significant issue for Wojtyła is his father's attitude, who is seeking answer in prayer to God. In school he becomes acquainted with the work of Polish Romantic writers, under whose influence he begins to deal with the question, why the innocent suffer. In the unsettled times of the Nazi occupation, while confronted with the loss of friends and working hard in the Solvay factory, he meets Jan Tyranowski. Thanks to him, Wojtyła discovers Carmelita's mysticism. The Dark Night of saint John of the Cross helps him to overcome the period after his father's death, his last closest relative. During the wartime he is faced with two choices. Either he remains in the world of art he is very fond of, or he yields to the challenge of the Carmelita's mysticism: to give up everything in order to gain Everything. Who helps him to decide, is Adam Chmielovsky, a character from Polish history, who leaves life of an artists to become a monk taking care of beggars. Wojtyła gives up his road of art and surrenders his whole life to God in priestly vocation.

The second chapter deals with Wojtyła's theological education and his service as a priest and a bishop. His dissertation thesis about saint John of the Cross, highlights the importance of inner experience and he comes to a conclusion that God must be a part of a man's life. The accent on the experience leads him from saint Thomas Aquinas' theology, to the phenomenology of Max Scheler. He begins to deal with the question of who a man is, quite thoroughly. The answer is a reaction to an unfair political and social situation in his native Poland. He forms this answer in his work 'Love and Responsibility' and 'A Man and an Act'. A man is created in the image of God, a fact which in Wojtyła's case primarily means being able to have a relationship with God, needs to realize its existence through self giving love. Wojtyła adopts Scheler's idea, that suffering awakes love, and what should be at the top of this process, is recreation of the human society into the civilization of love.

In the third chapter we witness the ongoing lifelong wave of friendliness, which Wojtyła practiced also after he became the Pope. Filled with theoretical knowledge, especially with the richness of the Carmelita's mysticism and his own experience with suffering and

pain, John Paul speaks to the world about a man as the only way the Church should take. A man in the triangle of God's love should become its main source of interest. He constantly reminds the world, that there is no evil God wouldn't be able to use for the greater good. Evil often becomes the means of awakening love, he reminds as the Pope.

Wojtyla's life lived in a dialog with God and a man is an answer to a being, where pain, suffering and death have significant place, though not as accessories, but as its natural parts. The civilisation of love proclaimed and built by him, becomes an inspiring alternative to the egoism of a modern man.