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THE DIALOGUE OF BELIEVERS IN GOD
WITH NON-BELIEVERS:
THE CHALLENGE FACING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN THE NEW CENTURY

Abstract. The Catholic Church in Poland faces various difficult challenges. One of them is the dialogue with people who declare their lack of faith in God. Modern atheism in Polish society is largely a consequence of the persecution of religion conducted for decades by the institutions of the Polish communist state. Current secular tendencies also have a significant impact.

The phenomenon of the lack of faith is a challenge that necessitates new forms of pastoral work. The Church takes certain actions inspired, for example, by a document published by the Polish Episcopal Conference Council for Religious Dialogue in 2003, entitled “Dialogue: a Challenge for the New Century.” Part of the document refers specifically to “dialogue with non-believers.” Papal documents on atheism and non-believers provide guidance to priests and lay members of the Church.

The Magisterium Ecclesiae has generated several practical recommendations for pastoral work. What is needed is a matter-of-fact, objective description of atheism and the lack of faith. It is necessary to initiate dialogue with non-believers at the doctrinal level, by listening carefully to their views; and at the practical level, by taking actions for the common good. The dialogue should be aimed at achieving a better knowledge of the other party, i.e. understanding the articles of faith on the one hand and, on the other, the theses and rationale behind the lack of faith.

Only credible witnesses to the faith in God, those who believe by their own personal choice and conviction, can guide non-believers to the truth about God, Jesus Christ and human beings. The dialogue with non-believers is difficult due to strong non-rational prejudice, e.g. emotional bias, trauma, resentment and aggressive media propaganda against religion. However, one should not give up attempts at dialogue and communication. The imperative of the dialogue stems from Jesus Christ, Son of God who, by assuming human nature, entered the state of dialogue with every human being, both believers and non-believers.

Key words: dialogue; non-believers; believers; Church in Poland.

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With the end of World War II, Soviet atheism was imposed on Poland. For decades, the Catholic Church in Poland was struggling with the totalitarian Communist system that used its atheist worldview as a tool of oppression. The functionaries of the godless state felt a deep hostility towards religious faith. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of Polish families remained faithful to “God, Honour and the Motherland” despite the atheists’ control over the legal and political system. The boundary between these two groups ran across married couples and families.

Successive post-war generations of young people, educated by the state school system, by the media and institutions of “low culture” or, later, pop culture, were infected with prejudice against the Church and faith in God. Non-believers in Poland today are largely “heirs of the culture of Communist Poland where there was no place for religion in general and for religious faith in particular. One can also encounter a phenomenon of people who “practice faith but do not believe.”¹

This text is merely a short reflection on the relations between believers and non-believers in Poland. These relations are regulated by documents of the particular and universal Church. The study discusses the following issues:

- 1) The Church vis-à-vis non-believers in Poland;
- 2) Papal documents devoted to non-believers as a model for the Church in Poland;
- 3) Practical pastoral guidance.

1. THE CHURCH VIS-À-VIS NON-BELIEVERS IN POLAND

Until Poland regained full sovereignty in 1989, it had been difficult for the Church to conduct institutional dialogue with non-believers because the fundamental conditions for dialogue, including the willingness to engage in dialogue and the equality of its partners, simply did not exist. Marxism-Leninism professed by the elites and “working masses” of Communist Poland ruled out any dialogue with people believing in God. Religion was regarded by atheists as an abnormal growth on the “healthy” organism of the Communist state. According to the atheist worldview, religion and the Church were to be eliminated not only from the life of society but also from the

¹ Eugeniusz SAKOWICZ, “Praktykujący a niewierzący,” *Homo Dei. Przegląd Teologiczno-Duszpasterski* 70(2000), 1: 36-40.

consciousness of families and individuals, as they were supposed to become *homo sovieticus* in all aspects of their “existence.”² However, some attempts to initiate dialogue were actually made³, but they were to be controlled by the appropriate agencies of the totalitarian state.

The 1990s saw the emergence of initiatives related to dialogue, including dialogue with people who do not believe in God. These initiatives were promoted by the Episcopal Conference of Poland as well as the academic community.⁴

On 25 September 2001, a text entitled “Polish Church Prepares Document on Dialogue” appeared on the website *wiara.pl*. The article said that the Polish Episcopal Conference Council for Religious Dialogue was working on a document that was to be a response to the challenges of religious and social life in Poland, requiring the ability to conduct dialogue. As stated by Bishop Stanisław Gądecki, President of the Council mentioned above, it was to be published in three versions as: 1) an accessible pastoral letter; 2) an extended version of that letter, elaborating on the problem of dialogue in greater detail; 3) an online version encouraging a broader discussion of the issues concerned.⁵

The imperative of dialogue is “a religious requirement.” Bishop Gądecki remarked, “As Christians, we rely on the premises of faith. We believe that the Lord is the one who started the dialogue with human beings first and talks with human beings and all humanity. This talk assumed the loftiest form in Jesus Christ, who encourages us to follow His example and engage in dialogue.”⁶

² Eugeniusz SAKOWICZ, “Religia—‘ufantastycznione odbicie realnego świata.’ Negacja religii i kultu przez system komunistyczny w powojennej Polsce,” in *Potrzeba religii. Dynamika praktyk religijnych i rytualnych*, ed. Zdzisław Kupisiński (Lublin: KUL, 2015), 85-104.

³ Cf. Roman DAROWSKI, “Soborowy przełom w stosunku Kościoła do niewierzących,” in *Otwarcie w wierze*, ed. Roman Darowski (Kraków: WAM, 1974), 213-27; Grzegorz SCHMIDT, “Kościół katolicki w dialogu z niewierzącymi,” in *Otwarcie w wierze*, 228-44; Stanisław KOWALCZYK, *Z problematyki dialogu chrześcijańsko-marksistowskiego* (Warszawa: ODiSS, 1977); Jerzy CUDA, “‘Wierzący’—‘niewierzący’ współistnienie czy współpraca?,” *Chrześcijanin w Świecie* 10(1978), 8: 30-53; Stanisław KOWALCZYK, “Koncepcja dialogu w świetle Deklaracji Sekretariatu dla Niewierzących,” *Collectanea Theologica* 60(1970), 2: 21-32; Eugeniusz SAKOWICZ, “Sekretariat do Spraw Niewierzących,” in *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. 17 (Lublin: TN KUL, 2012), col. 1061-3.

⁴ On the sporadic Polish experiences of dialogue with non-believers, see Wiesław PRZYGODA, “Dialog mit der Nichtglaubenden als Herausforderung für die Kirche,” in *Teil oder Fremdkörper. Die Positionierung der Kirchen in Postkommunistischen Gesellschaften*, ed. Mieczysław Polak et al. (Gniezno–Wien: Gaudentinum, 2016), 114-7.

⁵ “Kościół w Polsce przygotowuje dokument na temat dialogu,” *wiara.pl*, accessed January 5, 2017, <http://info.wiara.pl/doc/143209.Kosciol-w-Polsce-przygotowuje-dokument-na-temat-dialogu>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

The document referred to by Archbishop Gądecki, currently President of the Episcopal Conference, was drawn up at the turn of this century and devoted in its entirety to various forms and manifestations of religious dialogue, including dialogue with non-believers. Its content and wording were prepared by institutions belonging to the Committee for Religious Dialogue, namely the Committee for Dialogue with Judaism, Committee for Dialogue with Non-Christian Religions and Committee for Dialogue with Non-Believers. The document, entitled “Dialogue: A Challenge for the New Century”, was adopted on 28 November 2003 during the general assembly of the Episcopal Conference of Poland at Jasna Góra. The text ended up in just one version, instead of three versions that had been planned,⁷ and was not read out in churches as the so-called pastoral letter. However, in 2004 it appeared in *Biuletyn Ekumeniczny (Ecumenical Bulletin)* with Bishop Tadeusz Pikus as editor-in-chief, published by the Episcopal Council for Ecumenical Affairs. It was also available on websites of some dioceses, e.g. the Łomża Diocese.

The first part of “Dialogue: A Challenge for the New Century”, entitled “Church on Dialogue and in Relation to Dialogue,” presents the modern notion of a dialogue and its theological perspective as well as an interreligious dialogue, its peculiar features and forms. The second part, “Situation in Poland: Insight and Recommendations,” discusses the dialogue inside the Church as well as the relationship between the Church and the lay community, its attitude to the believers of other religions and non-believers. It also indicates the prospects for dialogue with non-believers.

A paragraph, entitled “Dialogue with Non-Believers,” states:

Some members of our nation describe themselves as non-believers: they do not profess any religious faith, manifest their aversion to the Church, doubt the existence of God or even categorically deny His existence. We are obliged to respect such a self-determination of an individual. It may result from various reasons, related to their personal experiences or upbringing received at home. We should never question the good will of our interlocutor in advance. We should remember that in such cases we are also bound by the injunction to love our neighbour, to look for a platform of understanding and dialogue. We should be capable of showing our readiness to cooperate where we share common values and where we can explore the truth, admire beautify and multiply good. Remember the task given us by Pope John Paul II during his pilgrimage to Poland in 1979, ‘We have to follow in the footsteps of what or rather who Christ has been to the many generations of daughters and sons of this land. Not only to

⁷ “Dialog—Zadanie na nowy wiek,” *Biuletyn Ekumeniczny* 33(2004), 1: 94-110.

those who openly believed in Him with the faith of the Church, but also to those who seemed to stand aside, outside the Church. To those in doubt, in opposition.⁸

2. PAPAL DOCUMENTS ON ATHEISM AND NON-BELIEVERS: A MODEL FOR THE CHURCH IN POLAND

In order to rationally and responsibly prepare for today's dialogue between believers and non-believers, which is a challenge facing the Catholic Church in the new century, we should familiarise ourselves with the papal documents dealing with the subject and published already in the late nineteenth century when the lack of faith started to become a social, cultural, civilisational and global problem.⁹ In the reality of life today, certain papal or generally church statements may seem "very strong" or outright intolerant. However, we cannot distance ourselves from them because they are testimony to those times that have had such a strong impact on the reality today. The Church's unforgiving criticism of atheism and lack of faith has never been tantamount to a condemnation of the human being. The Church has always drawn a distinction between the errors or utopian ideas and individuals or groups that have succumbed to them or have been forced to accept them.

In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic faith *Dei Filius*, the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) indicated errors undermining faith, as well as human attitudes opposing faith. The Constitution described atheism as a negation of Christian faith. Thus, atheists are people who negate faith in their lives. The pope diagnosed atheism as a contradiction of the human intellect, which invariably leads to the destruction of the foundations of the life of the human community.

Atheism was discussed and opposed by Pope Leo XIII in the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* on labour (1891). Pius XI issued documents with a critique of atheism. These documents included the following encyclicals: *Miserentissimus Redemptor*—Acts of Reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (1928); *Quadragesimo Anno*—On the Reconstruction of the Social Order and its Improvement according to the Gospel, promulgated on the 40th anniversary

⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁹ More on these documents, see: Zbigniew KRZYSZOWSKI, "Ateizm," in *Jan Paweł II. Encyklopedia dialogu i ekumenizmu*, ed. Eugeniusz Sakowicz (Radom: Polwen, 2006), 61-71; Eugeniusz SAKOWICZ, "Kościół katolicki wobec niewierzących," *Studia Pastoralne* 9(2013): 246-56.

of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1931); *Caritate Christi*—On Prayer and Expiation in the Present Distress (1932); *Dilectissima Nobis*—On Oppression of the Church of Spain (1933). In the Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*—On Atheistic Communism (1937), Pius XI discussed the threat posed to humanity by the Communist ideology. He emphasised that dialectic materialism cannot be reconciled with the teaching of the Church, and described Communism, with atheism at its core, as a false ideology. He indicated its rejection of the idea of God, which goes hand in hand with the deprivation of human beings of their dignity. In the Encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* (1937)—On the Situation of the Church in the Third Reich, the Pontiff condemned the errors and perversions of the Nazi ideology, including the atheist pantheism characteristic of the then German ideology of disdain for man.

The above-mentioned statements made by the pontiffs on atheism and the lack of faith should be viewed in the context of political events in the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century. The Communist ideology, utopian in its nature, leading to bloody and ruthless revolutions, was perceived by the Church as a product of cognitive and moral chaos, an eruption of sin. The modernist movement has a particularly destructive impact on the way people think and judge.

The criticism of atheism and the lack of faith undertaken by the pontiffs stemmed from their concern for the threatened prospect of human salvation. Atheist systems have constituted the apotheosis of earthly life. They undermine the eschatological perspective of individual and community life as shown by the Church. Aware of the destructive consequences of atheism and lack of faith, the Church has been concerned for “all people of good will.”

However, in the past decades, it was impossible for representatives of the Church to engage in any kind of talk or dialogue as it requires the good will of both parties. The Church has always offered prayer for those who do not believe in God. This prayer has been addressed to God Almighty and, in particular, to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Pope John XXIII, who convened the Second Vatican Council, did not identify an individual with his or her views. He was convinced that every individual is free to search for the truth. An individual who is lost along the path towards the truth never loses their personal dignity. This Pope published the following important encyclicals affirming the value of the human being: *Mater et Magistra*—On Contemporary Social Progress in the Light of Christian Teaching (1961), and *Pacem in Terris*—On Peace among All Nations Based on Truth, Justice, Love and Freedom (1963). It is through these documents that today’s atheists and non-believers should be perceived.

In 1964, Pope Paul VI promulgated the Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*—On the Paths that the Catholic Church Should Follow while Fulfilling Its Mission Today. In 1971, he signed the apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* marking the 80th anniversary of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. In these documents, the Pontiff called for examining the origins of atheism, which may be linked to the reflection of an individual who is full of existential anxiety and ultimately negates the existence of God.

The teaching of the Church, particularly during and after the Second Vatican Council, was continued and elaborated by Pope John Paul II. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (sec. 2123-2126), he expressed his critical attitude to atheism that, in his opinion, “must therefore be regarded as one of the most serious problems of our time” (sec. 2123). He stressed that “since it rejects or denies the existence of God, atheism is a sin against the virtue of religion” (sec. 2125). Opposition to cognitive and axiological errors that riddle atheist ideology does not mean a lack of respect for people “guided by” these errors. The conscience of avowed atheists and non-believers in general should be respected just like in the case of believers who may struggle with existential anxiety.

John Paul II viewed every single human being as redeemed by Jesus Christ. What is more, he “saw” the Redeemer in all human individuals with whom the Son of God “united” in the mystery of Incarnation and by virtue of Passion, Death and Resurrection. He regarded individuals of every culture and epoch as children of one God.¹⁰

According to John Paul II, an atheist attitude and the lack of faith may morph into an attitude of trust in God. The prospect of conversion, a fruit of divine grace, is inscribed in the life of every human being, also an atheist and non-believer. Through “the contemplation” of atheism and lack of faith, the Church can improve and heal Herself and purify Her faith. It can be converted again and again.

John Paul II wanted to bridge the artificial gap separating faith from reason (cf. the title of the 1998 encyclical *Fides et Ratio*—On the Relationship Between Faith and Reason). He was building bridges of understanding between people of religious faith and non-believers. The Pope proclaimed the paradigm of new evangelization through which the Church would efficiently communicate with large and small communities and, above all, with individuals who had ignored or abandoned the faith of their ancestors.

¹⁰ Zbigniew KRZYSZOWSKI, “Kultura,” in *Jan Paweł II. Encyklopedia dialogu i ekumenizmu*, 321-34.

The successive pontiffs were supported by the relevant dicasteries of the Roman Curia in their apostolic work. Paul VI entrusted the dialogue with people distancing themselves from or negating religious faith to the Secretariat for Non-Believers (*Segretariato Per i Non Credenti*) he established in 1965.¹¹ For many years now, the Secretariat, founded in the spirit of the Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* and the teaching of Vatican II, has been promoting the idea of the dialogue between the Church and the modern world, including non-believers. The *aggiornamento* (in Italian: “bringing up to date”) proposed by Vatican II has meant, among others, making efforts to understand the reasons behind the lack of faith that spread among more and more communities and nations around the world. Paul VI’s Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae* from 1967 defined the main goal of the new dicastery, namely conducting studies on atheism and dialogue with non-believers. The main task of the Secretariat was to establish a centre of studies on atheism, its philosophical arguments and psychological, social, historical, cultural and political motivation.

Pursuant to John Paul II’s Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* from 1988 (in effect from 1989), the Secretariat was transformed into the Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers. The mission of this dicastery was to “conduct, in cooperation with Catholic cultural institutions, research on the lack of faith and religion and dialogue with atheists and non-believers open to honest collaboration.” In 1993, the Council was merged with the Pontifical Council for Culture.¹²

3. PRACTICAL PASTORAL GUIDANCE

In her article entitled “Dialogue with Atheists and Non-Believers” and published in *Ateneum Kapłańskie*, Katarzyna Parzych-Blakiewicz discusses the following issues:

1. Atheism and the lack of faith in the present times:
 - a) the essence of atheism and the lack of faith;

¹¹ Vincenzo MIANO, “Zadania Sekretariatu dla Niewierzących,” *Concilium* 2-3(1966-1967): 136-40; Stanisław KOWALCZYK, “Koncepcja dialogu w świetle Deklaracji Sekretariatu dla Niewierzących,” *Collectanea Theologica* 60(1970), 2: 21-32; Roman KULIGOWSKI, *Problematyka dialogu w świetle Dokumentu Sekretariatu dla Niewierzących “De Dialogo Cum Non Credentibus”* (Lublin: BKUL (mps), 1980).

¹² Eugeniusz SAKOWICZ, “Papieska Rada do Spraw Kultury,” in: *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. 14 (Lublin: TN KUL 2010), col. 1294-5.

- b) the causes of atheism;
- c) atheists, non-believers, “people of good will.”
- 2. Theological foundations of the dialogue of the Church with atheists and non-believers.
- 3. The characteristics of the dialogue of salvation in the evangelising work among atheists and non-believers;
- 4. The salvation history perspective of the dialogue with atheists and non-believers:
 - a) personal and Christological foundations;
 - b) salvation history truths in relation to the dialogue with atheists and non-believers.
- 5. Conclusions: proposals concerning the dialogue of the Church with non-believers and atheists.

In the last part of the above study, the author makes the following theological research proposals and pastoral suggestions:

- 1) The following problems require in-depth reflection and broader discussion: anthropomorphic image of God; “demythologization” of religion through the criticism of superstitions; initiation of the dialogue about Jesus Christ in the context of the philosophy of post-modernism and relativism; 2) Academic communities, particularly those with ecclesiastical faculties, have the right conditions for interdisciplinary debates. These possibilities should be used to conduct dialogue with atheists and non-believers; 3) The development of communication with the public requires the Church to be ready to properly absorb and interpret the content of mass culture and to form structures responsible for media content.”¹³

Furthermore, scholarly research should be conducted on humanism and moral theology constituting the foundation for dialogue with non-believers.¹⁴ Non-believers (as well as persons with a neutral attitude to religion) are undoubtedly a challenge that the Church in Poland should take up in many fields of pastoral work and philosophical scholarly reflection.¹⁵

¹³ Katarzyna PARZYCH-BLAKIEWICZ, “Dialog z ateistami i niewierzącymi,” *Ateneum Kapłańskie* 153(2009), 3: 495-506.

¹⁴ Roman KULIGOWSKI, *Teologicznomoralne podstawy dialogu z niewierzącymi we współczesnych orzeczeniach Kościoła* (Lublin: BKUL (mps), 1995); Roman KULIGOWSKI, “Sens dialogu Kościoła katolickiego z niewierzącymi,” in *Wobec nowego ateizmu*, ed. Ignacy Bokwa and Marek Jagodziński (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW, 2011), 233-54; Roman KULIGOWSKI, “Dialog—od spotkania do porozumienia. Teologicznomoralne rozważania o dialogu Kościoła z niewierzącymi,” *Kieleckie Studia Teologiczne* Website, accessed September 23, 2016, <http://www.kst.kielce.opoka.org.pl/Kuligowski.htm>.

¹⁵ Marek FIAŁKOWSKI, “Niewierzący i obojętni religijnie wyzwaniem dla Kościoła w Polsce,”

Marek Fiałkowski highlights the recommendations proposed in the document prepared by the Committee for Dialogue with Non-Believers Episcopal Conference of Poland Council for Religious Dialogue, entitled “Non-Believers in the Parish: Pastoral Recommendations” (1 April 1999).¹⁶ He stresses the need for initiating the dialogue with non-believers at the doctrinal level by listening carefully to their views and doubts, and at the practical level, by taking actions for the common good and taking account of human dignity. No less important is the courageous search for new forms of the dialogue with non-believers at the level of parishes and dioceses as well as initiatives on a broader scale. There is a need for both individual meetings of priests with non-believers and meetings for non-believers and those searching for God as part of retreats during Advent or Lent, devoted to reflection on faith, reasons for losing it, religious problems, etc. Other interesting solutions include the organisation of chaplaincy for non-believers in cities and the creation of groups for sharing views on various topics between believers and non-believers and those distancing themselves from the Church.¹⁷

The reasons for the lack of faith are very complex and often specific to individuals. Therefore, they should be carefully examined and assessed in order to mitigate or eliminate them. One could say that non-believers are “a sign of the times,” a challenge that forces the believers to deepen their faith. When believers confront atheist attitudes, they have to continually reflect on their own devotion to God, the growth, maturity and strength of their faith. The creed of religious people should be presented in a clear and transparent way so that it can be understood by those indifferent to God.

Wiesław Przygoda points out that “the dialogue between believers and non-believers is primarily aimed at a better understanding of each other’s views and cooperation for the development of the world, humanity and culture.”¹⁸ Drawing on the teaching of Benedict XVI, this author proposes three

Ateneum Kapłańskie 165(2015), 2/639: 229-37; Marek Fiałkowski, “Dziedzinniec pogan miejscem dialogu z niewierzącymi,” in *Peryferie wiary wyzwaniem dla Kościoła*, ed. Wiesław Przygoda and Marek Fiałkowski (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2015), 103-13.

¹⁶ KOMITET DS. DIALOGU Z NIEWIERZĄCYMI RADY KONFERENCJI EPISKOPATU POLSKI DS. DIALOGU RELIGIJNEGO, “Niewierzący w parafii—sugestie duszpasterskie,” *Wiadomości KAI* (27), July 8, 1999, 18-21.

¹⁷ Marek FIAŁKOWSKI, “Troska Kościoła o niewierzących. Na marginesie dokumentu pt. ‘Niewierzący w parafii—sugestie duszpasterskie’,” in *W prostocie prawdy, w pokorze miłości. Studia i materiały dedykowane Księdzu prof. zw. dr. hab. Janowi Walowi*, ed. Tadeusz Borutka et al. (Kraków: Wydział Teologiczny PAT/Wyd. Czuwajmy, 2008), 248-50.

¹⁸ Wiesław PRYGOДА, “Dialog mit der Nichtglaubenden als Herausforderung für die Kirche,” in *Teil oder Fremdkörper*, 106.

key topics of dialogue between believers and non-believers:

- 1) The beauty of Creation as a place of meeting and dialogue;
- 2) The debate on the essence of human beings;
- 3) The testimony of the life of believers.¹⁹

It seems that the testimony of believers is crucial to guide non-believers to the truth about God who was the first to love every human being. It should always be remembered, however, that non-believers can be persuaded to accept faith in Christ and the truth of His Gospel only by those who believe by conviction and their own choice. Furthermore, Przygoda notes that the dialogue with non-believers is difficult and requires not only great patience but also a certain amount of knowledge of natural sciences and philosophy. Rhetorical skills are also necessary to rationally present ideas and convictions. Przygoda observes, however, that “Christians sometimes want to leave the natural platform of a dialogue all too soon and use theological or biblical arguments instead.”²⁰ Besides patience and rhetorical skills, the climate of a dialogue, particularly its emotional mood, intellectual and spiritual aura, is also important.

FINAL REMARKS

Although the dialogue with non-believers is extremely difficult due to strong non-rational prejudice, e.g. emotional bias, trauma, resentment and aggressive media propaganda that manipulates the human conscious and unconscious, one should not give up attempts at dialogue and communication. Non-believers should be asked about the reasons for their lack of faith.

The knowledge and experience contained in the papal documents from the past and modern times should be the model for the Church in Poland. However, believers should not follow observations made more than 100 years ago verbatim. Instead, they should have the courage to establish the dialogue with non-believers who show their good will. For the sake of dialogue in general, it cannot be conducted with virulent, aggressive atheists, enemies of God and the Church.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 108-14.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

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