Christian experience is a man's relationship with the Trinitarian God, wherein the center of this experience is a personal encounter with Christ. As Potworowski rightly notes, “To be a Christian is basically to participate in the experience of Christ. Not only in mysticism, but for all Christians, Christian experience is the introduction into the experience of Christ.” This same idea is present throughout all the theological writing of Saint Pope John Paul II. For example, the Pope begins his first encyclical letter, Redemptor Hominis,
with the following words, “The Redeemer of man, Jesus Christ, is the center of the universe and of history.” Our spirit,” continues the Pope, “is set in one direction, the only direction for our intellect, will and heart is towards Christ our Redeemer, towards Christ, the Redeemer of man. We wish to look towards Him, because salvation is only in Him, the Son of God, repeating what Peter said: ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (Jn 6:68).’”

In this paper, we reflect, on the question of how the human person experiences his encounter with Jesus Christ. We argue that Saint Pope John Paul II’s notion of ‘experience’ is based on the truth that man in his entirety (as the unity of body and soul) is created in the image of God who is the Eternal Communion of Love and, therefore, is called to live in the communion of self-giving love and in this way, by both imaging and participating in the mystery of the divine love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to discover his true self. The following matters are discussed in this paper:

1. We ask a question: how does man experience his encounter with Jesus Christ? We argue that for Saint Pope John Paul II, an authentic Christian experience always contains the dimensions of ‘givenness’ and ‘inwardness.’ In other words, man is capable of entering into personal relationship with Christ only because he has received God’s love first.

2. Experience is man’s encounter with the world, others, and God, wherein man does not remain passive but is engaged in relationship with others through free conscious actions. The more man is receptive and giving himself to others, the more authentic experience he has. Therefore, for Saint Pope John Paul II, through the act of self-giving love man gains the richest experience of himself and others. Our analysis will show that the experience of faith in Christ is dynamic by its very nature: to believe in Christ means to follow Christ through concrete acts of love and service to God and other human beings.

3. Finally, we consider the ecclesial dimension of Christian experience, arguing that for the Pope a person can have an authentic Christian experience (the experience of his encounter with Christ) only if he belongs to the Body of Christ, the Church; that is, there is no Christian experience outside of the Church.

Some authors criticize the Pope for ‘betraying’ the phenomenological method in his papal writings on morality, reducing Christian experience to the experience of obedience to the Church’s teaching, i.e., to the external observation of the universal law. Contrary to this opinion, we argue that for Saint Pope John Paul II Christian experience is the most personal in its character, because it is a dialog between a man and Christ. In other words, the very foundation and source of Christian experience is Jesus Christ himself, who appeals to the human ‘heart’, calling man to live and to experience life according to the Spirit. Let us discuss this in more detail.
The Character of ‘Givenness’

A man is called to enter into the union with God through Jesus Christ. This union can be reached only if a man responds to Jesus’ call with an open heart, allowing Him to sanctify and transform him into a child of God through the grace of the Holy Spirit. As Weigel rightly notes, in Christian experience man cannot “objectivize” God, for he does not come to know God as he perceives material objects. Rather, Weigel continues, “[We] come to know God as we come to know another person, through mutual self-giving. As two persons in love come to live ‘within’ each other without losing their own unique identities, God comes to live within us, and we come dwell, in a sense, ‘within God’, without the radical difference between Creator and creature being lost.”

In the book, *L’Expérience Chrétienne*, Mouroux expresses a similar idea, saying, “God is never possessed, in the strict sense of the word, because he is not grasped in himself …Thus the presence of God is a hope, not a reality fully given to us; and religious experience is a constant search for the presence [of God] in communion.”

The very nature of Christian experience is absolutely different from that of the empirical, for Christian experience begins with God’s call. It is not something that is produced by man. An authentic Christian experience always contains a character of God’s givenness, which means, “Nothing in Christian experience has its origin in man: everything springs from an eternal call of the merciful Father revealed by Christ in time.” In authentic Christian experience, “the decisive factor is not control but letting oneself be controlled and the new way of ‘going where one would rather not go’ that is thus made possible.” It requires the abandonment of self-interest and self-renunciation to such an extent that man has to be ready to accept that which Balthasar in his reflection on St. John of the Cross calls “the experience of non-experience.”

Ratzinger quotes von Balthasar on this subject, “It can be said with certainty that there is no Christian experience that is not the fruit of the overcoming of one’s own self-will or, at least, the determination to overcome it. And with this self-will we must include also all our willful efforts to evoke religious experiences on the basis of our initiative and by our own methods and techniques.” “It is only when we renounce all partial experiences,” Ratzinger continues, quoting again Balthasar, “that the wholeness of being will be bestowed upon us. God requires unselfish vessels into which to pour his own essential unselfishness.”

Ratzinger concludes then, “From this there follows an important catechetical conclusion: the being-led to a religious experience, which must start in the place where man finds himself, can yield no fruit if it is not, from the beginning, directed to the acquisition of a readiness for renunciation.”

Saint Pope John Paul II discloses this character of givenness of Christian experience in his analysis of the text of Matthew 19:16–26, in the encyclical letter *Veritatis Splendor*. The Pope begins the letter with the story of the dialogue of Jesus with a rich young man, the story that Janet Smith characterizes as a “dramatization of a personalist moment.” It describes the encounter of one concrete individual with Christ: a young man who, conscious of his own faithfulness to the commandments, seeks to enter into a deeper personal relationship with God. John Paul II writes:
For the young man, the question is not so much about rules to be followed, but about the full meaning of life. This is in fact the aspiration at the heart of every human decision and action, the quiet searching and interior prompting which sets freedom in motion. This question is ultimately an appeal to the highest Good which attracts us and beckons us; it is the echo of a call from God who is the origin and goal of man’s life.\textsuperscript{14}

Jesus’ conversation with the young man reveals the \textit{drama} of the human person. The young man is a good man, he observes the commandments, and, even more, he is rich. So we might say that he has a good life. However, he knows that he is still lacking something essential in his life. He knows that he has to do something much more in order to attain an eternal life of perfect happiness. The drama of the young man’s situation, though, consists in his \textit{incapability of reaching his fulfillment only by his own efforts; in being unable to take the next step by himself alone}. John Paul II’s meditation helps the reader to see that the essence of the Christian moral life and, thus, Christian experience, is fundamentally a matter of \textit{encounter} and \textit{response} to Jesus who seeks man \textit{first} by showing him his redeeming love and mercy. Every authentic Christian, just as the rich young man of Matthew’s gospel, experiences that “the moral life presents itself as the response due to the many gratuitous initiatives taken by God out of love for man. It is a response of love…”\textsuperscript{15}

Jesus’ meeting with the Samaritan woman is another example that Pope John Paul II gives us in his encyclical letter \textit{Mulieris Dignitatem} (see, no. 13, 15, 31). In this famous encounter, Jesus begins the conversation with the Samaritan woman by asking her for a drink in order to quench his thirst. This thirst is not only physical. The thirst of Jesus, indeed, is his infinite thirst for man; it is a thirst to reveal the saving power of the divine love and to reunite each man with the Heavenly Father. Driven by this immeasurable thirst, Jesus approaches the Samaritan woman and, while knowing that she is a sinner, “discusses the most profound mysteries of God with her”; reveals to her “God’s infinite gift of love, which is like a ‘spring of water welling up to eternal life’” (Jn 4:14); tells “her about God who is Spirit, and about the true adoration which the Father has a right to receive in spirit and truth” (cf. Jn 4:24); and finally, “he reveals to her that he is the Messiah promised to Israel (cf. Jn 4:26)”\textsuperscript{16}

Jesus speaks to the woman in such a way that he awakens in her a thirst for something much greater than physical water. If at first the woman has a superficial attitude towards life, then at the end of the conversation she is not afraid of looking at the depths of her own being, seeking to find the meaning of her life. She now experiences a thirst for “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4:14) and, realizing that Jesus can quench her thirst with “living water” (Jn 4:10) which will satisfy her forever, asks, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst” (Jn 4:15). The dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman gives us a good illustration of what it means to have an authentic Christian experience. In the course of the conversation, the woman becomes aware of the reality that has been unknown to her before meeting Jesus. It is Jesus who introduces to the woman a totally new kind of experience: by giving the woman ‘the living water of grace’ and
showing that love is stronger than sin, Jesus invites her to enter into a personal relationship with Him.

Finally, by the example of both his personal life and his teaching, Saint Pope John Paul II encourages everyone to look at Mary, who, being “the representative and the archetype of the whole human race,” shows us a prime example of an authentic Christian experience. What Mary teaches us is that *fiat* lies at the very foundation of Christian experience. By responding with her *fiat* Mary abandons herself in “the obedience of faith” to whatever God’s plan for her might be. “Indeed at the Annunciation,” says John Paul II, “Mary entrusted herself to God completely, with the ‘full submission of intellect and will’… She responded… with all her human and feminine ‘I’, and this response of faith included both perfect cooperation with ‘the grace of God that precedes and assists’ and perfect openness to the action of the Holy Spirit…” Her willingness to be the “servant of the Lord” (cf. Lk 1:38) implied the willingness to accept all that she had to experience in her life as God’s will. Even though she could not understand many things, she accepted them as a mystery of God, in which she freely chose to participate. Therefore, by her *fiat* she accepted not only the joy of giving Jesus to the world but also took part in the suffering of her Son.

In A “Catechesis on Mary”, Pope John Paul II proclaims, “By her conduct, Mary reminds each of us of our serious responsibility to accept God’s plan for our lives. In total obedience to the saving will of God expressed in the angel’s words, she became a model for those whom the Lord proclaims blessed, because they ‘hear the word of God and keep it’ (Lk 11:28).” Mary teaches us that man’s daily response to God’s will in his life is the very source and foundation of the experience of man’s participation in the divine life. A man truly living Christian experience accepts with faith and obedience what God gives him and goes where God sends him. In other words, man, by entrusting to God’s hands all his life, allows God, in a sense, to form his religious experience.

We may conclude our reflection on the character of the ‘givenness’ of Christian experience with the words spoken by Saint Pope John Paul II to the students of the Catholic University during his visit in the United States, in 1979:

I leave you now with this prayer: that the Lord Jesus will reveal himself to each one of you, that he will give you the strength to go out and profess that you are Christian, that he will show you that he alone can fill your hearts. Accept his freedom and embrace his truth, and be messengers of the certainty that you have been truly liberated through the death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This will be the new experience, the powerful experience…

**The Character of ‘Inwardness’**

Let us begin our discussion of the character of the ‘inwardness’ of Christian experience by returning once again to Saint Pope John Paul II’s analysis of the text of Matthew 19:16–26. In giving his answer to the great drama of the young man, as well as every man at all
times, Saint Pope John Paul II places a special emphasis not merely on the importance of following the commandments but also on the fact that Jesus himself has to become “a living and personal Law.”  The Pope invites us to enter into the question asked by the young man allowing ourselves to be guided by Jesus. In one audience in 1979, Pope John Paul II proclaimed: “Let, then, Jesus Christ be the center of your life, your ideals, your interests, and your goals.”  The Pope never stopped saying that if the human person wants to understand who he is, if he wants to understand the meaning of his existence, the meaning of his vocation, the ultimate meaning of his actions, he has to turn to Jesus. As we read in the encyclical letter, Redemptor Hominis, “The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly – and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being – he must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self.”

Saint Pope John Paul II is well aware, though, of the danger of turning into ‘formalism’ in living out the Christian life. Like Pharisees, who ceased living in the mystery of a personal relationship with God, reduced their religious experience into the experience of legalistic practices. Therefore, in his preaching and writings, the Pope lays a strong emphasis on ‘interiority’ in man’s encounter with Christ. In his Wednesday Catecheses, commenting on the text of Matthew 5:27–28, Saint Pope John Paul II points out that Jesus applies the law not only to the external deeds of man but He turns to the “inner man,” seeking to reach his “heart.”  Christ appeals to each individual in a personal and unique way. The human being “of every time and of every place feels called in the most adequate, concrete, and unrepeatable way, since Christ appeals to the human ‘heart’ [Pol. serce]. For this reason, the human being cannot be the subject of any generalization.”  “With the category of ‘heart,’ continues the Pope, “everyone is called individually, even more than by name. He is reached in that which determines him in a unique and unrepeatable way. He is defined in his humanity ‘from within.’”

Saint Pope John Paul II reveals this character of the ‘inwardness’ of Christian experience by using beautiful and symbolic language. On many occasions, he speaks of the Christian life as the lived experience of a personal relationship between the human heart and the Heart of Jesus. According to Moell, John Paul II rightly can be called “Pope of the Sacred Heart.”  It is not surprising that among traditional practices of the devotion, the Litany of the Sacred Heart is one of Pope's favorites. He quotes the invocations from the Litany of the Sacred Heart on a number of occasions whereas his favorite invocation is “Heart of Jesus, fountain of life and holiness.”  Saint Pope John Paul II invites everyone to look at the Divine Heart of Jesus, at the Heart that is always burning with love for men and open to pour out His healing graces. At the meeting with young people of France, in 1980, Pope John Paul II proclaimed: “[R]aise your eyes more often toward Jesus Christ! He is the Man who loved most, and most consciously, most voluntarily and most gratuitously! … Contemplate the Man-God, the man with the pierced heart! … It seems to me that tonight, Christ is whispering to each and every one of you: “Give me your heart! … I will purify it, I will strengthen it, I will turn it toward all those who need it.”  

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The Pope emphasizes the centrality of prayer in the life of a Christian, arguing that man’s encounter with Jesus can be fully effective only if it takes place in the very depths of his heart: in that “‘intimate place’ [miejsca wewnętrznego], in which good and evil, sin and justice, concupiscence and holiness fight each other in man.” For example, at the retreat for university students of Cracow in 1972, Wojtyła spoke: “What does praying mean, and why should we pray? … Prayer is a conversation, and we are well aware that conversation can take various forms. Sometimes it is a simple exchange of words, and this is simply the exterior aspect.” However, “[d]eep conversation takes place when we exchange not only words but also thoughts, hearts and feelings, in other words, when we give of our own selves.”

If a person prays in this way, the Holy Spirit works in his heart, strengthening and guiding him ‘from within’ in his prayer. Prayer, through the power of the Holy Spirit, becomes man’s real participation in communion with Christ, who, knowing how deeply the human heart is wounded, enters into the heart of man and by His loving and merciful Heart purifies and ‘decentralizes’ his egocentric heart so that he may open his heart completely to God.

“John Paul II’s great desire for all human persons was that they might encounter Christ and open wide the doors of their lives to Him, most especially in the Eucharist,” since it is in the Eucharist that the believer experiences a personal communion with Jesus most vividly. As the Pope himself testifies, “If my past and present life can be described as ‘active’, let us not forget that the ‘act’ par excellence of each day is the Holy Mass, which constitutes the most perfect synthesis of prayer and the heart of our meeting with God in Christ.” In the retreat given to the students of Cracow, before he became pope Karol Wojtyła spoke on the Eucharist in the following words,

We say that communion means simply union, but it can also mean community. … Holy Communion simply means union, and therefore when people say, “I am receiving the Lord Jesus,” they are expressing themselves correctly. Jesus is a person; he is the Divine Person, who also became man through the mystery of the Incarnation and is therefore an historical person, a person whom we can receive.

If we look at the question from this angle, we almost at once see the second element of this encounter or union-communion. We can therefore state clearly that at communion not only do I receive the Lord, but he also receives me. If we limit ourselves exclusively to the sign aspect, I receive the species of bread, or of bread and wine. However, if, through the sign, we come to the reality of the Eucharist – the reality of communion – then we must realize that here we have two [persons] in one another’s presence: Our Lord and me. We can even say that it is he who first receives me, allowing me to come to him when I receive him.

In the Eucharist, man attains God and God joins himself to him in the most perfect union. The Heart of Jesus burns with the desire to be united with the heart of man. Jesus, therefore, not only gives Himself in the Eucharist, but He desires that man gives himself to Him in return. In the Eucharist, so to speak, the believer is called to experience “Admirabile commercium – ‘marvelous exchange.’” As Wojtyła explains it, “We give our humanity to him who wants to give us his divinity in sacramental communion, that mystery of faith.
When we gaze on this mystery with the eyes of faith, then its fundamental effects on the eschatological level manifest themselves. … God wants to unite us with himself, and this is of vital importance for each person.” In his encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, the Pope depicts this idea speaking of Mary’s own reception of Holy Communion after the Lord’s paschal mystery. He writes, “For Mary, receiving the Eucharist must have somehow meant welcoming once more into her womb that heart which had beat in unison with hers and reliving what she had experienced at the foot of the Cross.”

Saint Pope John Paul II saw the encounter with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist as transformative. Christ, who gives Himself in the Eucharist, transforms man from the inside, making him capable of understanding the mystery of this encounter. By looking at Jesus through the eyes of faith, man recognizes Him as absolutely primary in his life. He realizes that Jesus is the one who knows him better than he knows himself, the one who has chosen him before he chose Him; He is the one whose love to him is infinite and all powerful. Christ is the one who calls him to Himself, for He desires to bring him back to the Father’s House. This deep experience of Christ enables man to develop a full trust in Christ and awareness that without Christ he cannot reach absolute happiness and fulfillment. The person understands that he should not be guided by his own subjective understandings of what is good and evil, but must submit himself to Christ’s authority.

If a personal relationship with Christ is lived out in the depth of man’s heart, this experience touches the person at the very core of his being, bringing about a profound interior conversion. A starting point for conversion is man’s experience of himself standing before God with all his sinfulness, unworthiness, and nakedness. In the encyclical letter *Redemptor Hominis*, Pope John Paul II reminds us,

We cannot however forget that conversion is a particularly profound inward act in which the individual cannot be replaced by others. … [In this act of personal conversion] there should be a pronouncement by the individual himself with the whole depth of his conscience and with the whole of his sense of guilt and of trust in God, placing himself like the Psalmist before God to confess: ‘Against you... have I sinned’ (Ps 50:3).

On different occasions, Saint Pope John Paul II uses the story of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–32) to describe the nature and process of conversion. He analyses the story from the point of view of the interior experiences of the prodigal son, affirming that these experiences are common to all of us. The son, who has squandered his inheritance, has to painfully find what he has lost, what he has been deprived of by committing sin. This painful experience of the lost dignity makes the prodigal son to see himself and his actions in their full truth. “It is at this point,” says the Pope, “that he makes the decision: ‘I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants’” (Lk 15:18–19).

Conversion, however, is not only man’s deepest experience of his sinfulness but, first of all, the experience of God’s infinite love and His mercy. God shows His mercy to man,
for He desires to bring man back to Himself. “[O]ur human ‘heart,’” proclaims the Pope, “addresses God [not only] in all the unimaginable majesty of his divinity and his holiness [but], at the same time, in his wonderful ‘openness’ to mankind: in his ‘condescension.’” It is precisely “the certainty of the goodness and love that belongs to the essence of the fatherhood of God” that enables man “to achieve a victory over the consciousness of his guilt and unworthiness” and, like David, with courage and confidence to cry to the Lord from the depths of his heart, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and put a new and right spirit within me” (Ps 51:10). Likewise, in one of her letters St. Thérèse of Lisieux shares her own personal experience, “[S]ince I also have been given to understand the love of the Heart of Jesus, I confess that all fear has been driven from mine. The remembrance of my faults humbles me, and helps me never to rely upon my own strength, which is mere weakness. More than all, it speaks to me of mercy and of love.”

Man, whose heart is touched by God’s mercy and love, receives the gift of the New Law not as an ‘external law’ but as an ‘interior law’ (cf. Jer 31:31–33). The law becomes internalized: the person does not experience God’s law as something imposed upon him from outside, but rather as an integral part of who he is as the human person. As the Pope explains in Veritatis Splendor, “Those who live ‘by the flesh’ experience God’s law as a burden, and indeed as a denial or at least a restriction of their own freedom; on the other hand, those who are impelled by love and ‘walk by the Spirit’ (Gal 5:16)…find in God’s Law the fundamental and necessary way in which to practice love as something freely chosen and freely lived out.” Indeed, those who love and ‘walk by the Spirit,’ feel the interior impulse not to stop at the minimum demands of the Law, but to live it in its fullness.

The Dynamic Character of Christian Experience

In the “Letter to Families”, Saint Pope John Paul II asks, “What then is the relationship between the life of the person and his sharing in the life of the Trinity?” The Pope answers the question with the words said by St. Augustine at the beginning of his “Confessions”, ‘Our heart is restless until it rests in Thee.’ The phrase ‘restless heart’ used by Pope John Paul II expresses well the dynamic character of Christian life, pointing out that Christian experience is not a static reality but rather is a dynamic relationship with God, self, and others. That is why man’s relationship with God is often described as the experience of living with the heart ‘set on a pilgrimage’ (cf. Ps 84:5). As we read in “The City of God” a citizen of the Heavenly City, “as long as he is in this mortal body, is a pilgrim in a foreign land, away from God; therefore he walks by faith, not by sight... While this Heavenly City...is on pilgrimage in this world, she calls out citizens from all nations and so collects a society of aliens, speaking all languages.” Saint Pope John Paul II expresses the same idea, saying, “The whole of the Christian life is like a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father, whose unconditional love for every human creature, and in particular for the ‘prodigal son,’ we discover a new every day. This pilgrimage takes place in the heart of every person, extends to the believing community and then reaches to the whole of humanity.”
To be on a journey back to the Father’s house means not only being emotionally involved in worshiping God but it means following Christ. In Veritatis Splendor, Pope John Paul II emphasizes, “The way and at the same time the content of [man’s] perfection consist in the following of Jesus, sequela Christi... This is precisely the conclusion of Jesus’ conversation with the young man: “Come, follow me” (Mt 19:21). Following Christ is the heart and the very foundation of Christian moral life, for it is not just a matter of hearing Jesus’ teaching and obediently accepting a commandment, but it involves the firm clinging to the very person of Jesus Christ. “Following Christ,” explains the Pope, “is not an outward imitation, since it touches man at the very depths of his being. Being a follower of Christ means becoming conformed to Him who became a servant even to giving himself on the Cross (cf. Phil 2:5–8).”

But what does it really mean to follow Christ? How can man ‘hold fast to the person of Christ’? How does man ‘become conformed to Christ’? First of all, being a follower of Christ does not mean just ‘believing something’; that is to say, it is not just a static state of mind. An encounter with Christ is a dialogue and a communion of love and of life between the believer and Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (cf. Jn 14:16). It is an act of total trust, love, and submission to Christ, allowing Him to lead man’s actions. Following Christ, thus, is a dynamic reality, involving the whole person in his decisions again and again to do the will of God, to relate to other persons as Christ has shown it. It is an ongoing event that changes the whole life of the person, directing him towards a radically new way of living. As Saint Pope John Paul II reminds us, Jesus has given us a new commandment: “Jesus asks us to follow him and to imitate him along the path of love, a love which gives itself completely to the brethren out of love for God.”

Commenting on this new commandment, the Pope writes: “Jesus’ way of acting and his words, his deeds and his precepts constitute the moral rule of Christian life. Indeed, his actions, and in particular His Passion and Death on the Cross, are the living revelation of His love for the Father and for others. This is exactly the love that Jesus wishes to be imitated by all who follow him.”

The words and deeds of Christ reveal us the true nature of human action – or, as Melina puts this, “it is the light of Christ that… illuminate[s] the mystery of human action.” In the light of Christ, we see human action as a child’s loving response to Jesus’ invitation to enter into the “Father’s house” (Jn 14:2–3). In his reflection on human action, Melina expresses this idea as follows: “when we speak of the fullness of Christian action, we refer to a filial action, which does not terminates in itself but has its origin and end in the love of the Father that continues in the mission of the Spirit. The action of the Christian is a participation in the action of Christ in vital union with Him.” Similarly, in the encyclical, Veritatis Splendor, the Pope emphasizes that a Christian is aware of the “newness” which characterizes his actions: as a child of God, “by his actions [the person] shows his likeness or unlikeness to the image of the Son... he lives out his fidelity or infidelity to the gift of the Spirit, and he opens or closes himself to eternal life, to the communion of vision, love and happiness with God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.” Every human action contains the dimension of the participation in the filial relationship with the Father: in every
action, the person freely chooses either to accept or to reject the invitation to enter into a *covenant* with the Creator, and at the same time he accepts or rejects the Father’s gift of eternal life.

Thus, following Christ is a matter of charity and service, both of which need to be embodied in action, originating from a loving heart. “Love of neighbor,” emphasizes the Pope, “springs from a loving heart which, precisely because it loves, is ready to live out the loftiest challenges.” Once a man’s heart is touched by love, he is ready for an endless self-emptying. He is ready for the *sequela Christi*, which is not just an external imitation, but the deepest inner conformity to Christ, the person’s sincere desire to shape his life in accordance to his Master’s will. Man whose heart is touched by God’s redeeming love desires to respond to Christ invitation, ‘Come, follow me;’ he desires to overcome sin and to become more and more like Christ. Personal experience of Christ, therefore, is genuine only if man puts into practice the words of Christ, which he received in his heart.

The believer experiences the dynamism of the movement towards or away from Christ most vividly in his conscience. The Pope argues that conscience is more than just the ability of the human mind, in the exercise of practical reason, to apply moral principles to concrete situations. He refers to a passage from *Gaudium et Spes*, no.16, to deepen our understanding of conscience. The passage cited by the Pope explains: “In the depths of his conscience…man detects a law which he does not impose on himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience can when necessary speak to his heart more specifically: ‘do this, shun that.’ For man has in his heart a law written by God.” Thus, conscience is also a ‘witness’ of God’s caring love for man that directs a person’s activities toward his own flourishing and ultimately toward union with God. A properly formed conscience never closes man within himself but “opens him to the call, to the voice of God.” Conscience is that intimate place where man enters into a most intimate dialogue with God, where he interiorizes the words spoken by Christ, making them a part of his own value system, and then he strives to act according to them. “This process,” says Hogan, “is for the most part private and hidden, but it goes on continually within the heart of each one of us as we enter into a dialogue with Christ and face various situations day by day.”

The foregoing shows that an authentic personal experience of Christ is essentially dynamic in its character. As the Pope notes in his encyclical letter *Dives in Misericordia*, man, who comes to know and to love God through His mercy and grace, lives “in statu conversionis; and it is this state of conversion which marks out the most profound element of the pilgrimage of every man and woman on earth in statu viatoris.” As God’s Spirit works in the heart of man and man cooperates in surrendering his will to God’s will, he experiences how through acts of charity he moves more closely towards God with all his being, allowing the Holy Spirit to continue to purify and to strengthen him. Like the question which the rich young man asks Jesus, “What good must I do to have eternal life?,” is the one which rises from the heart of man who has been touched by God’s grace. It is an essential and unavoidable question of every man, for it is a question of how to reach the Father’s house, the place in which the human heart will find its perfect happiness and rest.
Thus, the dynamism of Christian life consists not just of a formal obedience to laws, but of living out faith that operates through acts of love to God and other people. Believers’ lifetime journey of following Christ is marked by ongoing conversion of his heart, which not only enables him to see things more and more clearly in their true light (Ezek 36:26; Jn 3:19–21), but makes him a Christ-like person: a man of love, humility, and mercy.

The Ecclesial Dimension of Christian Experience

To believe in the Trinity means to respond to God’s call to become communio. As Ratzinger comments on this idea, “[T]his means that the ‘I’ of the credo-formulas is a collective ‘I’, the ‘I’ of the believing Church, to which the individual ‘I’ belongs as long as it believes. In other words, the ‘I’ of the credo embraces the transformation from the individual ‘I’ to the ecclesial ‘I’…this ‘I’ utters itself only in the communio of the Church.” The Vatican II document, Lumen Gentium, states precisely: “God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely individuals, without bond or link between one another; rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people that acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness.” Recalling this essential truth, Saint Pope John Paul II spoke to the American lay people, in 1987, saying, “Salvation, which comes as a free gift of divine love in Christ is not offered to us on a purely individual basis. It comes to us through and in the Church. Through our communion with Christ and with one another on earth,” continued the Pope, “we are given a foretaste of that perfect communion reserved for heaven. Our communion is also meant to be a sign or sacrament which draws other people to Christ, so that all might be saved.”

In his “Catechesis on the Church”, Saint Pope John Paul II calls our attention to the fact that today, unfortunately, “many are separating, and even opposing the Church and Christ, when they say, for example, Christ–yes, the Church–no.” The Pope admits that this opposition, “Christ–yes, the Church–no,” might have different sources. One reason for saying no to the Church might be a superficial understanding of the nature and purpose of the Church. The other reason might be man’s unwillingness to follow the Church’s teaching on certain moral questions. Finally, no to the Church might be based on a general principle of rejecting mediation: “There are indeed people,” explains the Pope, “who, although admitting the existence of God, wish to maintain an exclusively personal contact with him, without allowing any mediation between their own conscience and God.” However, at the bottom of all these reasons for saying no to the Church lies one essential reason, that is, man’s unwillingness to say an unconditional yes to Christ. If a person does not accept what Christ has taught about the Church, how can he sincerely claim that his faith and trust resides in Christ? As Jesus himself queries, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’, and not do what I tell you?” (Lk 6:46). Saint Pope John Paul II invites, therefore, everyone to move from the contradiction Christ–yes, the Church–no, to the conviction Christ–yes, the Church–yes by turning to Christ with the heart fully entrusted to His saving Word.
“We must note,” emphasizes Saint Pope John Paul II, “that Jesus Christ himself wanted our faith in the Church.”

It is Christ who reveals to us that the Church is a part of Father’s plan of divine salvation, which from the beginning was entrusted to the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself points out this Trinitarian dimension of the Church in his final words to the apostles before his return to the Father: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). This also is indicated in Jesus’ ‘priestly’ prayer in the upper room:

I do not pray for these only [the disciples], but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me” (Jn 17:21–23).

According to Saint Pope John Paul II, this “poignant prayer” reveals to us that “the mystery of the Church…lies in the unity which the Son forms with the Father in the Holy Spirit.”

As we read in Lumen Gentium, the whole Church appears “as a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

In Christ’s priestly prayer, the Pope reflects further, “we have the depths of knowledge and the depths of surrender: the depths of love.”

“It is actually in virtue of this love,” emphasizes Saint Pope John Paul II, “that the Father has willed to unite humanity in his Son. The mysterium ecclesiae thus finds its origin in the mysterium Trinitatis.”

In this sense, the Church, as rooted in that absolute and unceasing love with which God himself loves man, is nothing else but a communion of love. “Communion,” writes the Pope, “is the fruit and demonstration of that love which springs from the heart of the eternal Father and is poured out upon us through the Spirit which Jesus gives us (cf. Rom 5:5), to make us all ‘one heart and one soul’ (Act 4:32).”

In his final prayer, the Pope notes, “…they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me” (Jn 17:23).

Waldstein, in his reflection on the experience of the encounter with Jesus in the Gospel of John, rightly notes, “It is in the unity of love, in the mutual ‘being in’ of the divine persons and the persons of this community, in their love for each other and for God, that the experience of the encounter with Jesus becomes possible in the present. … Here lies the key importance of the community of the Church in making the experience of the encounter with Jesus possible today.”

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that after Christ’s ascension into heaven, the disciples returned to Jerusalem and they all joined together constantly in prayer (cf. Acts 1:12–14). It is a community gathered by the will of Jesus himself, who, at the time of His
return to the Father, ordered his disciples to remain united in expectation of the other event he had announced: “I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:49). The author of the Acts of the Apostles introduces us to that first community of the Church in Jerusalem by reminding us of Jesus’ own exhortation: “And while eating with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 1:4).  

The texts cited above show not only that the first Church community results from an order of Jesus himself but also speaks of her divine nature. While the Church is “obviously a community, a huge universal society progressing through history,” as the ‘People of God’ she is more than just a social organization. God willed that the incarnation of Christ would continue in His Church until the end of time (cf. Mt 28:20). St. Paul reveals to us this real, continuing presence of Christ in the Church when he refers to the Church as the Body of Christ. St. Paul does not use the term ‘the mystical body’ – as, for example, we read in Lumen Gentium, “by communicating His Spirit, Christ made his brothers…mystically the components of his own body” – but rather speaks of the Church as the Body of Christ with realistic comparison to the human body, saying, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? … For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. … Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 6:15; 12:12, 27). By referring to the Church as the Body of Christ, St. Paul emphasizes that there is an ontological, not merely juridical or social, union between the community of believers and Christ.

The analogy of the body highlights both the unity of Christ and the Church and the unity among the members of the Body of Christ, pointing out the principle and source of this unity: Christ. In his “Catechesis on the Church”, Saint Pope John Paul II cites St. Paul's letters to the Colossians and Ephesians to explain the relationship between Christ, the Head, and the Church, His mystical Body. For St. Paul, the condition of participating in the life of the Body is the bond with the Head – a Head “from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God” (Col 2:19). St. Paul expresses the same idea in his letter to the Ephesians, emphasizing that, as head, Christ fills the Church, his body, with his divine life, so that, “speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love” (Eph 4:15–16).

In his interpretation of the text of Ephesians 5:25–33, Saint Pope John Paul II emphasizes the spousal character of the Church. The text gives us the analogy of the Church as a Bride and Christ as her Bridegroom: a reality that St. Paul calls ‘a great mystery’ (Eph 5: 32). If Eve was taken from the first Adam’s rib, then the Church is taken from the wounded side of the last Adam, who reconciles men to God in one Body through the Cross (cf. Eph 2:15). As Saint Pope John Paul II puts it, “The Church is indeed the body in which Christ the Head is present and active, but she is also the bride who proceeds like a new Eve from the open side
of the Redeemer hanging on the cross. The analogy of human marriage with the marriage of Christ and his Bride reveals the redemptive love of Christ for the Church. St. Paul tells us that “Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her… that he might present the Church to Himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle…that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25–8). According to the Pope, the analogy of spousal love helps us to penetrate into the very essence of that ‘great mystery.’ First, it allows us see “above all the aspect of God’s gift of himself to man who is chosen ‘from ages’ in Christ…a gift that is in its essential character…total…and irrevocable.” Second, it reveals that God wants every concrete ‘I’ to respond to His ‘total gift of self’ given to man in Christ not just individualistically but as a member of the Church, the Bride of Christ, who himself, in giving the Church his Spirit, established an indissoluble bond with her; who, in virtue of the Holy Spirit, sanctifies her and allows her to respond to love with love (cf. LG, 4).

The Church is a continuation of the Incarnation of Christ and His redemptive work in the world today. Christ is present in the Church, feeding and leading her by His Word and the sacraments. It is through Baptism – the sacrament which signifies and effects rebirth ‘of water and the Spirit’ and “establishes real and unbreakable bonds with the Blessed Trinity” – that a person both becomes a member of the Body of Christ and enters into a covenantal relationship with Him. This rebirth ‘of water and the Spirit’, however, is not a private event. It takes place in the presence of the community of faith and binds the baptized person not only to God forever but also to all baptized people, who are members of one Body, the Church. As we read in the Bible, for instance: ‘in Christ, there are many parts, yet one body’ (cf. 1 Cor 12:20; Rom 12:5); ‘we are knit together’ (cf. Col 2:19); ‘joined and built together’ (cf. Eph 2:21–22); ‘fellow heirs with Christ’ (Rom 8:17; 1 Pet 3:7); or ‘we shall be caught together’ (1 Thess 4:17). We can refer here to Ratzinger who emphasizes the communal character of Baptism, saying:

If being baptized in the name of the triune God means man’s entrance into the Son’s existence, we know…that… whoever becomes the son of this Father no longer stands alone. Entrance into this sonship is entrance into the great family of those who are sons along with us. It creates a relationship. To draw near to Christ means always to draw near to all those of whom he wants to make a single body. … And as sons we are to acknowledge so totally that we belong to Christ that we know ourselves to be one flesh, ‘one body’, with all his brethren. Baptism means, then, that we lose ourselves as a separate, independent ‘I’ and find ourselves again in a new ‘I’.

Christ’s sacrificial love, on which the Church is found and built upon as a communio of one God’s family, continues to bring people into the Body of Christ, drawing them closer to one another. “The Eucharist,” maintains the Pope in his encyclical letter Ecclesia de Eucharistia, is that “supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church.” It is the Eucharist, the sacrament of Christ’s sacrificial love that continuously creates and fosters the Church as the Body of Christ. As St. Paul asks, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not
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a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor 10:16). Commenting on this passage, Saint Pope John Paul II says, “Obviously, this refers to the personal Body of Christ which we receive in a sacramental way in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread. But St. Paul continues his discourse in answer to the question raised: ‘Because the loaf of bread is one, we though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf’” (1 Cor 10:17). The Pope then concludes, saying: “This ‘one body’ comprises all the members of the Church who are spiritually united to the head, who is the Person of Christ. The Eucharist, as the sacrament of the personal Body and Blood of Christ, forms the Church, which is the social body of Christ in the unity of all the members of the ecclesial community.”

By celebrating the Eucharist together and being fed by the real body and blood of Jesus Christ, by participating in worship and praying together, people experience both how they develop a more personal union with Jesus and how their communio is continually strengthened and renewed. An authentic Christian experience always contains a personal and communal experience of Jesus Christ. In this sense, we can say that, on the one hand, to accept Christ's invitation, 'Come, follow me', means not only to enter into a personal relationship with Christ, but ipso facto to build relationships with other members of the Church, to strengthen and enlarge the Body of Christ. The following of Christ is an active response to 'a new commandment' that Christ has given us to accomplish communion in the Church, saying: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34–45; cf. Jn 15:12–14). One who truly believes, who lets himself be guided by Jesus, does not reduce the sacramental life to a set of words and ritual gestures but experiences the sacraments as expressions of faith, hope, and love that naturally open his heart to his brothers and sisters in Christ.

On the other hand, a personal, dynamic relationship between the believer and Christ begins and develops at the heart of the community of the Church. The Church is that place where man, by encountering Jesus and responding to his call, ‘Come, follow me’, can come to know the love of the Father. As Ratzinger in this passage expresses it well, “The communal life of faith and liturgical worship in the Church offers what might be called experiential support… In mutual faith, in praying, celebrating, rejoicing, suffering and living together, the Church becomes a ‘community’ and thus a genuine living space for man where faith can be experienced as a force that sustains him both in his daily routine and in the crises of his existence.”

The development of personal faith in the Christian life arises from the communal experience of the sacramental life in the Church. Saint Pope John Paul emphasizes, “Christ instituted the Church as a community of salvation, in which his saving mediation is continued to the end of time in virtue of the Holy Spirit whom he sent. … It is impossible to separate mediation from the Church which participates in Christ’s function as mediator between God and men.” Therefore, the person, who says, Christ–yes, the Church–no, must seriously reconsider the authenticity of his faith, for the Christian knows that according to God's will, man is called to be in relationship with God precisely in the community of the Church. John Paul II encourages everyone, “Today let us say once again, yes to the Church, precisely because of our yes to Christ.”
Conclusion

Our analysis revealed the following. First, the very foundation and source of Christian experience is Jesus Christ himself, who appeals to man’s heart and calls man to respond to His love, allowing Him to transform his wounded heart. Second, reflecting on the dynamic character of Christian experience, we have shown that, for Saint Pope John Paul II, a personal experience of Christ is not just the result of being emotionally affected by Christ, but it is the fruit of following Christ through concrete acts of love and service to God and neighbor. Lastly, we have demonstrated that, according to Saint Pope John Paul II, Christian experience begins and develops in the *communio* of the Church. An authentic Christian experience always contains both, a personal and communal experience of Jesus Christ. In this sense, Christian experience is not only the fruit of being in a personal relationship with Christ but ipso facto the fruit of being in relationships with all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

REFERENCES


3 RH. No. 7 // AAS 71 (1979): 268. “[N]obis scilicet animus impellendus est, intellectus, voluntas, cor ad unum Christum, Redemptorem nostrum, sunt dirigenda, ad Christum, hominis Redemptorem. Eum aspicere volumus, quia in eo tantummodo, Dei Filio, est salus, cum Petro dicentes: 'Domine, ad quem ibimus? Verba vitae aeternae habes.'”


5 Weigel G. Witness to Hope. P. 85.

6 Mouroux J. L’Expérience. P. 34. “Dieu n’est jamais possédé au sens strict, parce qu’il n’est pas saisi en lui-même... Ainsi, la présence de Dieu est une espérance, et non une réalité pleinement donnée; et l’expérience religieuse est une perpétuelle recherche de la présence au sein de la communion.”


11 Ratzinger J. Ibid. P. 349.

12 Ibid. P. 350.


RH. No. 10 // AAS 71 (1979): 274.

In the „Theology of the Body” John Paul II uses the term “heart” 408 times. See, for instance, TOB, 25:2, 5; 26:5; 50: 1–2. We can refer once again to Mouroux, who also uses the term “heart” to emphasize the character of inwardsness of the Christian experience. He writes, “There is a place of the Christian experience, and that place is the depths of the soul – the heart [le cœur], or the spirit – where God calls, forgives, and gives life, and where each man replies in secret, and is converted each day by choosing God. This indicates absolute interiority [l’interiorite absolue] of the Christian experience. It takes place in man’s most hidden depths; it involves the entire spiritual freedom; it only exists in this freedom; everything that can – and must – produce it outside, only has value as a reflection and an expression, as a relationship to this spiritual source” (L’Expérience. P. 126).


Jan Paweł II. Ibid. P. 139. “Kategorię ‘serca’ nazywany jest każdy z osobna niejako bardziej jeszcze niż po imieniu. Jest dotknięty w tym, co o nim samym stanowi w sposób jedynego i niepowtarzalnego. Jest określony w swoim człowieczeństwie od wewnątrz.”


John Paul II. Holy Father, Sacred Heart. P. 59.

SAINT POPE JOHN PAUL II’S NOTION OF THE EXPERIENCE OF A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

l’homme au cœur transpercé! ... Il me semble que, ce soir, le Christ murmure à chacun et à chacune d’entre vous: “Donne moi ton cœur! ... Je le purifierai, je le fortifierai, je l’orienterai vers tous ceux qui en ont besoin…”

Jan Paweł II. Mężczyzną. P. 392. “...`miejsca wewnętrzne' , w którym przesilają się w człowieku dobro i zło, grzech i sprawiedliwość, pożądliwość i świętość.”


Wojtyła K. Ibid.


Wojtyła K. Christ within Us. P. 119–120.

Wojtyła K. Ibid. 123.


RH. No. 20 // AAS 71 (1979): 314.


DM. No. 5 // AAS 72 (1980): 1194–1195.


John Paul II. Visita Pastorale alla Parrocchia di Sant’Ignazio di Antiochia. No. 3: “La certezza della bontà e dell’amore che appartengono all’essenza della paternità di Dio, dovrà conseguire in lui la vittoria sulla consapevolezza della colpa e della propria indegnità.”


VS. No. 18 // AAS 85 (1993): 1148. “Qui ‘carni subiectus est’ Dei legem sentit tamquam onus, immo tamquam negationem aut, quoquo modo, proprie libertatis imminutionem; qui, contra, amore movetur atque ‘Spiritu ambulat’ (ci. Gal 5, 16) ... in lege Dei viam inventum fundamentalem et necessariam ad amorem colendum et exercitum.” In the interview with John Paul II, A. Frossard, noting that for Christ the law always gives way to charity, to the love of a human being, asked whether the Church’s teaching is not too strict in some cases. The pope answered his question, saying, “There is not a single commandment that ‘gives way’ to love. On the contrary, all the commandments find their accomplishment in love – and this accomplishment does not involve the renunciation of any of them: not an iota will pass away until all is accomplished. ... To anyone who takes the teaching of Christ seriously, the so-called ‘strict attitudes’ of the Church seem very kindly. ...To return to your question, in my opinion, if the Church has to fear not ‘imitating’ Christ
sufficiently, it is certainly not in the sense of being ’strict’ where he was ’indulgent.’ No, Christ was demanding. But he had such power to penetrate consciences that the very people who came to know his demands felt touched by love. In this the Church can never imitate Christ enough. But she will never cease to imitate him; she will never cease striving to do so.” *Frossard A., John Paul II. Be Not Afraid!* P. 130.


47 John Paul II, Pope. In My Own Words. Ed. Anthony F. Chiffolo. Liguori: Liguori Publications. 2005. P. 41. Reflecting on John Paul II’s Christian personalism, Matuszak writes, “The fact of the incarnation awakens in the human person the recognition of one’s own profound depth and the mystery of God’s plan in which God initiates a dialogue with man. In the words of the Psalmist, “deep calls out to deep” (Psalm 42:8). This dialogue ensures that the human will never walk alone on life’s journey, and it confirms the fact that the journey is a journey to the Father. For just as Christ had come from the Father and returns to the Father, the being of each person begins in the mind of God, and is fulfilled through the personal knowledge of God. Every person must come to know his or her true identity, hidden in God and in God’s divine plan. Personhood therefore is also constituted by relationship and mission.” (Matuszak. Person, Encountor, Communion. P. 225.)

48 VS. No. 19 // AAS 85 (1993): 1148–1149. “Via simulque huius perfectionis natura stat in Christi assectatione, in Christo sequendo ... Haec prorsus est colloquii Iesu cum adulescente conclusio: ’Et veni, sequere me (Mt 19, 21).’”

49 Ibid: 1150. “Sequi Christum non simplex est exterior imitatio, quia ad intima hominis pertinet. Iesu discipulos esse significat Ei conformes fieri, qui servus factus est usque ad sui ipsius donationem in cruce.”


53 Melina L. Ibid.

54 VS. No. 73 // AAS 85 (1993): 1191. “Dei filius, atque per actus suos demonstrat se imaginii Filii, ... similem aut dissimilera esse, suam erga Spiritus donum fidelitatem explicat aut infidelitatem, reseratur aut clauditur, ad vitam aeternam, ad visionis et amoris ac beatitudinis communionem cum Deo Patre, Filio et Spiritu Sancto.”


56 Ibid: 1191.


58 Ibid: 1180.


60 DM. No. 13 // AAS 72 (1980): 1221. “[Vivit] in statu conversionis ; qui profecto status partem designat principalem singulorum hominum peregrinationis super terram in statu viatoris.”
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65 Ibid. P. 37. See also P. 35–36.
66 See ibid. P. 36. In his analysis of John Paul II’s personalism, Ronald D. Lawler emphasizes that for John Paul II, to have an authentic experience of the faith in Christ is “to come to recognize that it is Christ who teaches in the Church...In recognizing Christ as the teacher in the Church, one comes to know that what the Church definitely teaches is worthy of all our belief, even if for a while it should seem mysterious.”
67 Ibid. P. 35.
68 Frossard A., John Paul II. Be Not Afraid! P. 177.
69 LG. No. 4 // AAS 57 (1965): 7. “Sic apparet universa Ecclesia sicuti ’de unitate Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti plebs adunata.’”
70 Frossard A., John Paul II. Be Not Afraid! P. 177.
71 John Paul II. Church. P. 42. See also, VS. No. 6 // AAS 85 (1993): 1138.
73 John Paul II. Church. P. 123.
75 John Paul II. Church. P. 125–126.
76 Frossard A., John Paul II. Be Not Afraid! P. 172.
77 LG. No. 7 // AAS 57 (1965): 9. See also. LG. Nos. 8, 23, 50 // AAS 57 (1965): 11, 27, 55.
78 See John Paul II. Church. P. 97–98. In the Encyclical Letter Redemptor Hominis, the Pope writes, “It is the community of the disciples, each of whom in a different way – at times very consciously and consistently, at other times not very consciously and very inconsistently – is following Christ. This shows also the deeply ’personal’ aspect and dimension of this society, which, in spite of all the deficiencies of its community life – in the human meaning of this word – is a community precisely because all its members form it together with Christ himself, at least because they bear in their souls the indelible mark of a Christian” (no. 21, AAS 71 (1979): 317).
81 TOB. 95b:1.
82 TOB. 95b:2.
LITERATURE AND SOURCES


Gauta: 2017 09 03
Parengta spaudai: 2017 09 11
Šventojo popiežiaus Jono Pauliaus II asmeninio santykio su Jėzumi Kristumi patirties samprata

Santrauka


REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: krikščioniška patirtis, vidinė Jėzaus Kristaus patirtis, sequela Christi, bendruomeninė Jėzaus Kristaus patirties dimensija.

KEY WORDS: Christian experience, inward experience of Jesus Christ, sequela Christi, communal dimension of the experience of Jesus Christ.