Another book by Zbigniew Dziubiński has been published, dealing with the issues of the ideological relationship of the Catholic Church with sport: sport in the service of the person and community from the perspective of Pope Francis. The author – activist, expert of the Ministry of National Education, professor at the University of Physical Education in Warsaw, president of the Salesian Sports Organisation of the Republic of Poland – is known in the academic community as the Author of independent works and the editor of numerous collective monographs devoted to social and humanistic aspects of sport, Olympism, tourism and recreation. The original monographs by Zbigniew Dziubiński are focused on exploring the philosophical, social and theological horizons in Catholic teaching about sports and sports education programmes in the Church. The starting point of these monographs are essentially two educational and philosophical traditions: Salesian and personalistic. The current work is devoted to the description and interpretation of the place of sport in its servant relationship to the person and community in the teaching and writings of Pope Francis. The interpretative dominant here is the perspective of personalistic thought, thus, it is worth emphasizing that the monograph is part of a broader trend of Polish personalism in pedagogy, sociology, theology and philosophy of physical culture, the classics of which are – next to Zbigniew Dziubiński himself – Priest Stanisław Kowalczyk and Andrzej Pawlucki.

The book consists of seven chapters bound by the framework of the Introduction and Summary. In subsequent editions of such a structure, the author focuses on the biography of Pope Francis (including his sports passions, e.g. as a football fan), educational and pastoral support of the Catholic Church for human sports activity, sociological and axiological characteristics of the phenomenon of sport, threats and pathologies, as well as the challenges faced by contemporary sport, and finally, the responsibility of the Church for sport, resulting from the unity of their goals in the service of the person and the human community. These issues are woven into the complex philosophical and sociological hermeneutics of sport itself, but in direct connection between the teachings of the Catholic Church and of Pope Francis, and sport.

The document Giving the best of yourself: a Document on the Christian perspective on sport and the human person, from the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, announced by the Holy See on June 1, 2018, was made the basis for depicting the Catholic and Pope’s thoughts on sport by the

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References


Author of the text. Although Pope Francis was not the direct author of this document, Dziubiński showed his enormous inspirational role in its creation, as well as repeated references to him in papal teaching. The title of the document itself was taken over by the main coordinator of its final shape, Cardinal Kevin Farrell, from Pope Francis’s speech to young athletes on June 7, 2014. The phrase “giving your best” can be safely treated as a perfect complement to the directive Citius, altius, fortius, which was written by Dominican preacher Henri Didon (1840-1900), and which became the motto of the Olympics and IOC. Sport, incomparable to any other human experience, is an area of constant struggle between man and himself. Sport reveals a human passion for crossing bodily, mental and spiritual boundaries. For Pope Francis, the formula “giving your best” means that sport should be a space for meeting (communication, dialogue, collective effort to compete), formation (shaping and improving the human person), mission (transmitting the highest values of sport in the world by using its global reach) and sanctification (by striving to realise the fullness of life, sport sanctifies life, because fullness is holiness).

It is impossible to refer to all the threads taken up by the Author in his rich and complex work. Considering the main idea contained in the title of the monograph, i.e. the idea of sport as a servant to man and the community, I will selectively focus on philosophical, more precisely anthropological and axiological, issues. The author emphasizes that the basis of the papal and Catholic understanding of sport and its relationship to man and community is personalism. What is personalism? It is a current of thought that the body is the servant of the soul, and is a whole in which both components are valued and true sacred, religious dimension of human life. Human experience, is an area of constant struggle between man and himself. Sport reveals a human passion for crossing bodily, mental and spiritual boundaries. For Pope Francis, the formula “giving your best” means that sport should be a space for meeting (communication, dialogue, collective effort to compete), formation (shaping and improving the human person), mission (transmitting the highest values of sport in the world by using its global reach) and sanctification (by striving to realise the fullness of life, sport sanctifies life, because fullness is holiness).

2. Z. Dziubiński, Sport w służbie osoby i wspólnoty... [Eng. Sport in the Service of the Person and the Community], p. 11.
5. Z. Dziubiński, ibidem, p. 97.
These words are in perfect harmony with Pope Francis’ maxim of “giving your best”. However, in order for sport to fulfil this transcendent function for forming a person, it must defend itself against the dangers of dehumanisation, against deviations such as aggression, dishonesty, illegal doping, mercantilisation and fetishisation of records. Pope Francis especially emphasizes in his teachings that the economic and political instrumentalisation of sport leads to alienation and enslavement of the person.

The personalistic perspective of thinking about man as a person led both popes to in-depth reflection on the communal dimension of the person. John Paul II wrote about the “pro-existence” of a person, his commitment to the good of another human being in the community of axiological goals. The model of an authentic community for both popes is the Church. The Church is an integrated whole in which the value of an individual is preserved, while being open to one’s neighbour and the good of the community. Dziubiński emphasizes the parallelism of the Church community and the sports community. Pope Francis constantly returns to the idea of practicing community through sport. Sport is a space for meeting, equality, teamwork and competition. The sports community does not recognise differences in race, religion or ideology. It is united by a common goal, which is the joy of experiencing competition in the community of athletes, coaches, referees, sports organisations, fans and journalists.

In light of these views, it is a pity that Dziubiński does not see in his monograph, even on the margins, religions other than Catholic (for example, those Oriental or - within Christianity - Protestant), openly supporting human sports activity and generating community sports events. Dziubiński, writing about three visions of sport: somatic-biological, humanistic and theistic, consciously narrows the latter to the Catholic tradition. However, this does not diminish the importance of the book’s basic message, which is the apologia of sport as a depository of personalistic and community values.

11 Z. Dziubiński, ibidem, p. 45.